

Food justice and ethical eating: perils and possibilities within Australian food movements

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

1MW	1 Million Women
ACCC	Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
ALV	Animal Liberation Victoria
ARCCC	Australian Religious Response to Climate Change
CFG	Consumer focus groups
CFS	Community food systems
CSA	Community Supported Agriculture
DAFF	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
GMOs	Genetically modified organisms
HOPE	Householder's Options to Protect the Environment Inc.
Melb	Melbourne
NCOSS	New South Wales Council of Social Services
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NSW	New South Wales
PETA	People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals
RSPCA	Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
RSPO	Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil
Syd	Sydney
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

ABSTRACT

Ethical food movements have grown significantly in recent decades. This thesis employs a food justice conceptual framework to examine how ethical food movements are evolving in the Australian context. The thesis focuses on 46 key non-governmental organisations (NGOs) promoting ethical eating and four focus groups involving ethical eaters. It examines how and why people are engaging in ethical eating and the tensions and complexities that are emerging. It argues for a more reflexive, nuanced and egalitarian conception of ethical eating that recognises the tensions, tradeoffs and barriers to engagement faced by consumers. Understanding ethical eating as a continuum or imperfect process allows for such complexity to be viewed as inevitable, while still recognizing the value in developing ethical eating repertoires. It also details the ways that NGOs are working to help consumers negotiate the constraining factors that limit their consumptive choices. In adopting a food justice lens this thesis highlights the importance of responding to food system injustices, while also ensuring advocates retain a critical eye on the substantive ‘justness’ of their own actions and pronouncements.

AUTHOR STATEMENT


This thesis is my own work and contains no material published elsewhere or written by another person, except where due reference and attribution is made in the text.

The content of this thesis is a result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program.

This thesis has not been submitted in whole or in part for the award of any other degree or diploma at any tertiary institution.

All research reported in this thesis received the approval of the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee. Protocol number: 5201400861

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a final horizontal stroke, positioned above a solid horizontal line.

Date: 24/04/2015

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“For now I ask no more than the justice of eating”

- The Great Tablecloth, Pablo Neruda

“... studies of food need justice and studies of justice need food”

– Cultivating Food Justice, Alkon & Agyeman

Chapter 1 Setting the table

1.1 Introduction: a dysfunctional food system and the call to ‘eat ethically’

The litany of complaints leveled against the modern, industrial food system is growing. They include concerns regarding ecological deterioration, inequitable distribution of and access to food resources, corporate monopolisation, human health threats, animal welfare abuses, labour exploitation and human rights violations. Recognition of this spate of injustices is accompanied by increasing calls for people to ‘eat ethically’ (Johnston et al. 2011). Changing how we produce and consume food is identified as a vital element in addressing what Sage (2012) terms the ‘Faustian bargain’ underlying the dominant food system; the provision of year-round availability of cheap ‘food’¹ without regard for the negative environmental and human consequences. The need to eat is of course physiologically inescapable, and viewing eating as an ethico-political act endows individuals with some level of normative and political power and agency to shape their everyday lives and worlds. In light of the growing popularity of ethical food movements, this thesis engages a food justice lens to explore the perils and possibilities of ‘ethical eating’ in Australia. It examines what ethical eating means, what it seeks to achieve, what tensions and obstacles need to be resolved or overcome, and what enabling conditions might assist in expanding ethical food movements.

The thesis adopts a food justice approach. Food justice represents an emerging framework gaining popularity among both academics and food system activists, particularly in North America. It presents itself as both an organizing concept for food movements and a conceptual lens for examining ethical eating practice, providing a common lexicon linking the two. At its core, food justice is concerned with inequality, exploitation, oppression and privilege within the food system (Alkon 2014). As Gottlieb and Joshi (2013) put it, “[a] food justice framework ensures that the benefits and risks of how food is grown and processed, transported, distributed, and consumed are shared equitably” (see blurb). Food justice is also seen as requiring equity in terms of participation in determining what the food system should look like and how this vision should be advanced (Gottlieb & Joshi 2013; Alkon & Agyeman 2011).

¹ Some critics suggest that a great deal of what emerges from industrialised food production is not food so much as cheap ‘foodlike substances’ (Pollan 2006).

Applying food justice as an interrogative optic in examining ethical eating can reveal and help dissect both the proximate and structural injustices ethical food practices seek to address and the tensions that emerge from this, as well as the injustices that might go unremarked, or might unwittingly be created or reproduced. Johnston & Szabo (2011) suggest that there is a paucity of empirical research examining the contradictions of ethical food consumption encountered in 'real life' situations. This thesis makes a contribution to filling this gap in the literature. Utilising a food justice lens offers insights into the complexities and complications of how 'eating ethically' actually gets played out and can help direct attempts to strengthen ethical food movements.

It is a natural fit in light of the numerous injustices that are seen to emerge from the increasingly industrialized food system. Contemporary food production, distribution and consumption practices are recognised as a key cause of environmental disturbance and degradation (Tukker et al. 2009; Steinfeld et al. 2006). Concern about environmental impacts is gaining even greater currency in light of the fact that the food system, particularly animal agriculture, is one of the chief contributors to greenhouse gas emissions (Mäkinen & Vainio 2013; Stehfest et al. 2009). Food is at the centre of a double injustice here, as the predicted climatic changes are expected to impact the ability to grow food, particularly among some of those already most vulnerable to food insecurity (Edwards et al. 2011; Keating 2012).

In addition to concerns about us 'eating away' at the biophysical systems we rely on, the industrial food complex is the cause of much moral consternation regarding the unjust treatment of both animals and people. The suffering of animals raised in intensive systems or pulled en masse from the oceans has long been a cause for distress (Safran Foer 2011). There are also a range of human rights and social justice issues. These include the use of trafficked and child labour, poor working conditions, unfair remuneration and unsustainable livelihoods for those who grow, catch, transport, processes and supply our food (Schlosser 2012; Schrage & Ewing 2005). The dumping of agricultural surpluses on global markets lowers the price of produce internationally with devastating consequences for small farmers in developing countries (Pollan 2006). The rise of land grabbing in developing countries has also pushed many small-scale farmers and indigenous communities off their traditional lands (De Schutter 2011).

Western food consumption practices are linked to diet related diseases such as diabetes, cancer and ischemic heart disease while intensive production practices are linked to the emergence of pandemics and a range of food safety issues (Weis 2007). The so-called ‘nutrition transition’ means that problematic epidemiological changes are likely to emerge in developing countries as residents increasingly adopt Western-style diets (Popkin et al. 2012).² Despite the increases in caloric output that a productivist approach to food has provided, we face a ‘stuffed and starved’ paradox (Patel 2007). Parts of the world suffer from significant over-nutrition and engage in wanton waste, while a billion others cannot get enough to eat.

In developed countries there is a further paradox in which obesity occurs simultaneously with a perverse form of malnutrition and food insecurity (Holden Feinberg & Petersen 2010); while nutritionally inadequate processed food is generally accessible, fresh, healthy food is not always available, particularly in underprivileged communities (Morales 2011).³ Even in countries that are considered food secure at a national level, ‘food deserts’ or ‘junk food jungles’ exist in geographies of disadvantage that make it very difficult for certain communities to access healthful, responsibly produced food (McClintock 2014; Farmar-Bowers 2012; Coveney & O’Dwyer 2009).⁴

Making more ‘ethical’ food choices becomes one way to overcome the impotence that might be felt in the face of some of the daunting challenges the dysfunctional food system presents. A multiplicity of social movements concerned with more ethical food practices have emerged at local, national and global scales (Holt-Giménez & Shattuck 2011). Food social movements are collective efforts by broad alliances of individuals and organisations advocating for social change in terms of how we produce, distribute and consume food (Flowers & Swann 2011). The following section details the growth of such ethical food movements in the Australian context. Section 1.3 then outlines the aim of the research and the questions this thesis addresses. Section 1.4 explains the need for this research and the contribution it makes and finally, Section 1.5 provides an overview of the thesis structure.

² Western diets are heavy on animal products and foods high in fats, sugars and refined carbohydrates (Weis 2007).

³ Julie Guthman’s recent work (2013; 2011b) problematizes a simplistic ‘obesogenic environment’ explanation of obesity which focuses on the built environment and calorie intake, highlighting a range of other complex factors that may offer alternative or contributory explanations including exposure to environmental toxins. Guthman (2013) notes too that, “features of the built environment may be as much an effect of sociospatial patterning as a cause” (151).

⁴ McClintock (2014) points out that some authors take issue with the use of these terms arguing that they have racially problematic connotations.

1.2 Ethical eating and the growth of food movements in Australia

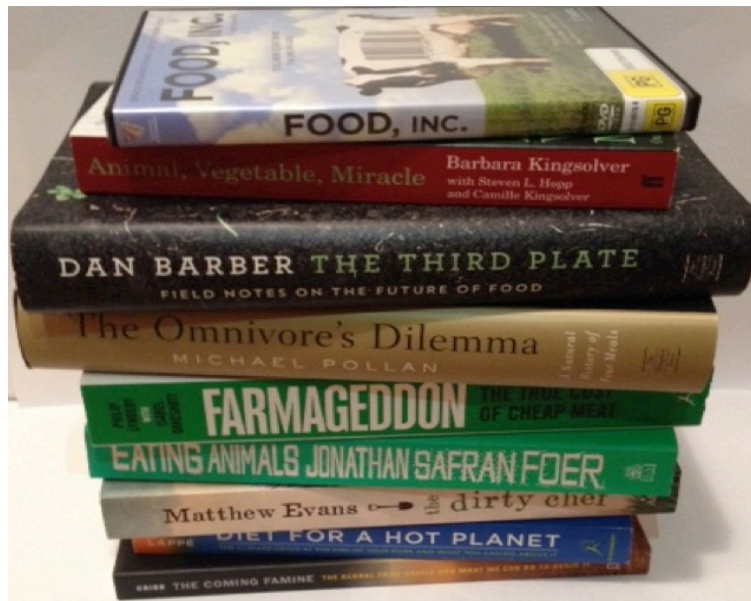
Encouragements to eat ethically are part of a broader trend towards ‘ethical consumption’ that has been gaining momentum in recent years (Lewis & Potter 2011). While it would be reductive to suggest that we can simply eat our way out of all of these problems, the mainstreaming of food movements and the burgeoning popularity of media content promoting ethical eating are testament to the fact that ethical considerations are becoming an increasingly important aspect in sourcing and eating food. In light of this, Orson Welles’ call to, “Ask not what you can do for your country. Ask what’s for lunch” (quoted in Zhexembayeva 2014: 12) might in fact be more insightful than first appears.

Drawing on sociological theory, Johnson et al. (2011) argue that ethical eating can be conceived of in terms of ‘repertoires’, which can be understood as the varied sets of practices, discourses, narratives, grammars and values of ‘ethical eating’ that reflect its ‘multifaceted’ rather than ‘monolithic’ nature. A repertoires approach helps capture the diversity (and sometimes incongruity) of ethical eating. Practices and discourses of ethical eating differ with place and among groups with varying levels of cultural and financial capital. As Johnson et al. (2011) suggest, access to particular repertoires is influenced by geographic locale, social location, ethno-cultural background, values and experiences. This recognizes the situated nature of ethical eating and the need for emplaced and contextualized understandings. A repertoires approach is therefore consistent with a food justice lens’ emphasis on both spatial and social location of ethical eaters, and how these contextual characteristics impact their consumptive choices (Alkon & Agyeman 2011; Gottlieb & Joshi 2013). It emphasizes the need to move toward more detailed geographies of ethical eating.

A repertoires approach also recognizes that some of the practices, discourses and narratives of ethical eating are more dominant than others (Beagan et al. 2014). Dominant repertoires of ‘ethical eating’ are familiar from prominent filmic and literary forays into the contemporary food system (see Figure 1; *Food Inc.*, Kenner 2009; Kingsolver 2007; Pollan 2006; Barber 2014; Evans 2013; Safran Foer 2011; Lappé 2010). These have proven box office hits and shot to the top of best-seller lists. They argue that practices such as eating seasonal, local and organic food, eating ‘less but better’ meat and dairy or avoiding animal products, and shopping at farmer’s markets, provide a better deal for farmers, the environment, animals and

consumers. For many, the pull of conscientious consumption is strengthened by the fact that a number of foods advocated as ‘ethical’ in the popular polemics are framed as more gastronomically pleasing; we’re told they’re both more ethical and tastier (see Barber 2014; Evans 2013; Pollan 2006).

Figure 1 Popular texts on the food system and ethical eating



This growing engagement with food and its normative consequences is beginning to develop into a significant social phenomenon in Australia (Higgins-Desbiolles et al. 2014). As food, particularly ‘good’ food, is increasingly ‘celebritized’ (Johnston & Goodman 2015, forthcoming), we have witnessed the emergence of Australian lifestyle shows and celebrity chefs promoting a kind of ethicurean approach. Examples include Matt Moran’s *Paddock to Plate*, Matthew Evans’ *Gourmet Farmer* and the Australian installment of *River Cottage*. Evans’ recent *What’s the Catch?* and *Gourmet Farmer Afloat* programmes advocate for more ethical seafood consumption.

New cookbooks centered on ethical eating grace the kitchen shelves. In 2015 the Earth Hour Australia movement⁵ is focusing its ‘Appetite for Change’ campaign on food, releasing a ‘Planet to Plate’ cookbook featuring recipes from well-known Australian food personalities. A range of ‘ethical eateries’ spouting ‘zero waste’ and ‘field to fork’ philosophies have

⁵ The Earth Hour movement was initiated in Australia in 2007 by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). It is concerned with a number of environmental issues, with a particular focus on climate change.

popped up in our major cities alongside farmers' markets, farm gate trails, pick your own events and food box schemes. The number of farmers' markets in Australia more than doubled between 2004 and 2011 (DAFF 2012). The Fair Trade label has also grown considerably in Australia in recent years (Cooke 2010). There has been a resurgence of backyard, balcony, community and school veggie gardens (Lyons et al. 2013), replete with chickens and beehives.⁶ Even our major supermarkets are increasingly drawing on ethical food repertoires in their product lines and campaigns. Figure 2 shows some of the spaces and practices associated with the growth of ethical food movements in Australia.

Government campaigns concerning food consumption have largely focused on 'healthy eating' with the result that many Australians turn to alternative sources for information on other aspects of the ethicality of their food choices (Pearson et al. 2010).⁷ In this context, non-government organisations (NGOs) have become an important source of ethical food messaging and the number of organisations active in this space has increased significantly in the last decade. NGOs also play an increasingly important role in ensuring effective food governance, particularly in relation to the development of food policy at both local and national levels.⁸

As ethical eating rhetoric and practice become more common it is increasingly important to critically interrogate how these are being interpreted and engaged in Australia. Understanding what ethical food movements in Australia look like and where their strengths and weaknesses lie is necessary to advancing them.

⁶ Growth of such initiatives has been supported by a number of small-scale local government and corporate social responsibility (CSR) grants.

⁷ Campaigns regarding food waste such as the New South Wales Office of Environment and Heritage's 'Love Food, Hate Waste' campaign represent one area where the government engagement in food messaging has moved beyond issues of health.

⁸ Food issues are making their way onto the political agenda. Political representatives have expressed tripartite support for creation of a national food waste strategy for example (Bettles 2015).

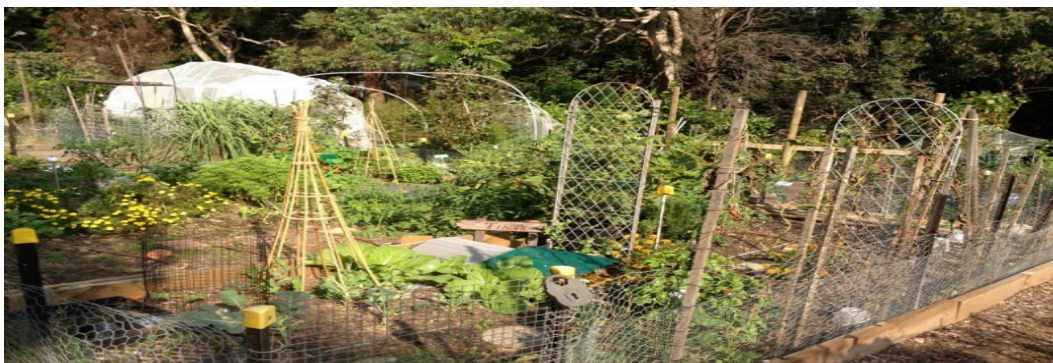
Figure 2 Examples of the growth of ethical food movements in Australia



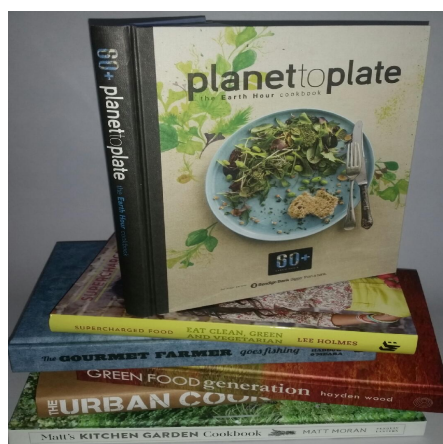
Marrickville farmer's market, Sydney. 2015.



Produce exchange and heritage vegetables for sale Woodend farmer's market, Melbourne, 2014.



Turramurra Lookout Community Garden, Sydney, 2015.



Recent Australian ethical eating cookbooks



Backyard beehives, St Ives, Sydney, 2015.



Brothl 'zero-waste' restaurant, Melbourne. Jeffers, P. (2014) Photograph. Retrieved from <<http://www.goodfood.com.au/good-food/eat-out/review/restaurant/brothl-20141121-3kv3j.html>>.

1.3 Research questions

Drawing on the conception of ethical eating as repertoire, this thesis adopts 'food justice' as the primary lens through which to examine the emerging moral economy of food.⁹ It offers an Australian perspective of the justice issues that underlie and emerge from the ethical eating repertoires being engaged and enacted by different actors.

Although there are a number of actors involved in ethical eating repertoires, it focuses on two in particular; the key NGOs responsible for much of the ethical food messaging in Australia, and self-identified environmentalists, as a subset of consumers likely to be aware of and responsive to some of the more dominant ethical eating repertoires in which environmental concerns have been given particular attention (Johnston et al. 2011). It is underpinned by the following research questions:

- 1) What ethical eating repertoires are being engaged by Australian NGOs and consumers?
- 2) What justice concerns motivate and inform 'ethical eating' practices identified by these actors in the Australian context?
- 3) What justice tensions, conflicts or difficulties emerge from decisions regarding what and how to eat, and how are these shaping understandings of and attempts to eat ethically?

⁹ The moral economy of food refers to how ethical positions may influence, direct and challenge food production-consumption networks and practices, including the emergence of new and 'alternative' forms of production and provisioning (Jackson et al. 2009).

- 4) How are ethical eating proponents in Australia responding to the concerns raised in food justice critiques of ethical food movements?

1.4 Research contribution and expected outcomes

In part this thesis is a response to the relative dearth of food justice work in Australia. While the academic literature exploring issues of food justice is growing alongside the appetite (and indeed market) for ‘ethical food’, there remains a need to expand food justice scholarship both spatially and thematically. The current body of literature focuses almost exclusively on a North American context. While there will certainly be overlaps in food justice concerns across countries, it is not possible to simply extrapolate from one locale to another. Ethical food repertoires differ geographically (Johnston et al. 2011) and different cultural, racial, political and ecological histories, spatial geographies and policy approaches manifest different food justice issues. Accurately capturing these nuances and recognizing novel food justice concerns arising out of the contextual specificities of different places requires extending the geographic purview of food justice work. This thesis employs a food justice lens to examine the particular justice issues implicated in repertoires of ethical eating engaged by Australian NGOs and environmentalist consumers. It helps lay foundations for further work on contextualized and emplaced understandings of ethical eating in Australia.

Additionally, existing work exploring ethical food practices in Australia has tended to focus on specific behaviours such as eating organic (Lockie et al. 2002; Lockie et al. 2004; Lea & Worsley 2005; Lockie 2006) or growing your own (Larder et al. (2014); Turner et al. 2011). There has been comparatively little attention directed towards exploring multiple ethical eating practices collectively. While detailed examinations of particular practices are highly useful, it is also necessary to explore the relationship between different practices and how, taken together, they manifest broader repertoires of ethical eating. Examining the relationship between different practices can help reveal the tensions that exist between them and the complications that can arise in determining how to eat more ethically.

Although a few Australian researchers have examined some environmentally motivated food behaviours collectively (see Pearson et al. 2014; Lea & Worsley 2007), environmental concerns are only one aspect of eating ethically. Other empirical studies using a more expansive ‘ethical eating’ frame have generally had a marketing basis (eg. Burke et al. 2014),

with the result that they exclude non-capitalist or anti-consumerist practices. This thesis helps address these gaps by examining broader ethical eating repertoires that encompass a more diverse array of motivations and behaviours. It brings together these different streams of research to provide a more complete picture of the complicated dynamics of ethical eating in Australia.

By applying a food justice frame to analyse the lived complexity of eating ethically, this thesis contributes to a better recognition of the possibilities, as well as the perils of ethical eating in Australia. Recognizing the value of ethical food movements, it proceeds not from a place of judgement but instead offers a ‘caring critique’ (Slocum & Cadiuex 2015) in order to explore ways that food movements may further expand their resonance and relevance. I approach this work with an understanding of research as a ‘performative practice’ with normative force that can be generative in revealing and energizing new potentialities and directions (Gibson-Graham et al. 2014; Cameron & Wright 2014). It is hoped therefore that the findings presented here will be of particular use to those organisations active in promoting ethical eating practices and advocating for policy reform in Australia.

The research explores what organisations might learn from each other and from consumers and what possibilities exist for strengthening the relationships between different groups working towards a more just food system. More broadly, it contributes to existing literatures on ethical consumption, sustainable lifestyles and geographies of eating (Lewis & Potter 2011; Barnett et al. 2005; Barr & Gilg 2006). Finally, it identifies some important avenues for future research in the Australian context.

1.5 Thesis structure

The structure employed in the rest of this thesis is displayed in Figure 3.

Chapter 2 outlines how the conceptual lens of food justice can be used in investigating ethical food repertoires in Australia. Drawing on the existing literature it highlights the way a food justice focus can help reveal the motivations, tensions and trade-offs of eating ethically. It also examines the food justice critiques of ethical food movements that inform the fourth thesis question.

Chapter 3 details the method of data collection and analysis used and its rationale. The thesis adopts a multi-method qualitative approach informed by grounded theory. Data collection involved three components. Firstly, collection of web and campaign material advocating ethical eating from 46 key NGOs from across Australia. Secondly, interviews with representatives from 13 of the most influential of these and finally, a series of four focus groups conducted with self-identified environmentalist consumers.

The following four chapters each relate to one of the thesis questions.

Chapter 4 begins to offer a picture of ethical eating repertoires in Australia. The first section explores the ethical eating behaviours advocated by the 46 NGOs and identified by environmentalist consumers in focus groups. The following sections then explain some key themes and grammars of a ‘just’ food system informing ethical eating repertoires and framing understandings of food justice.

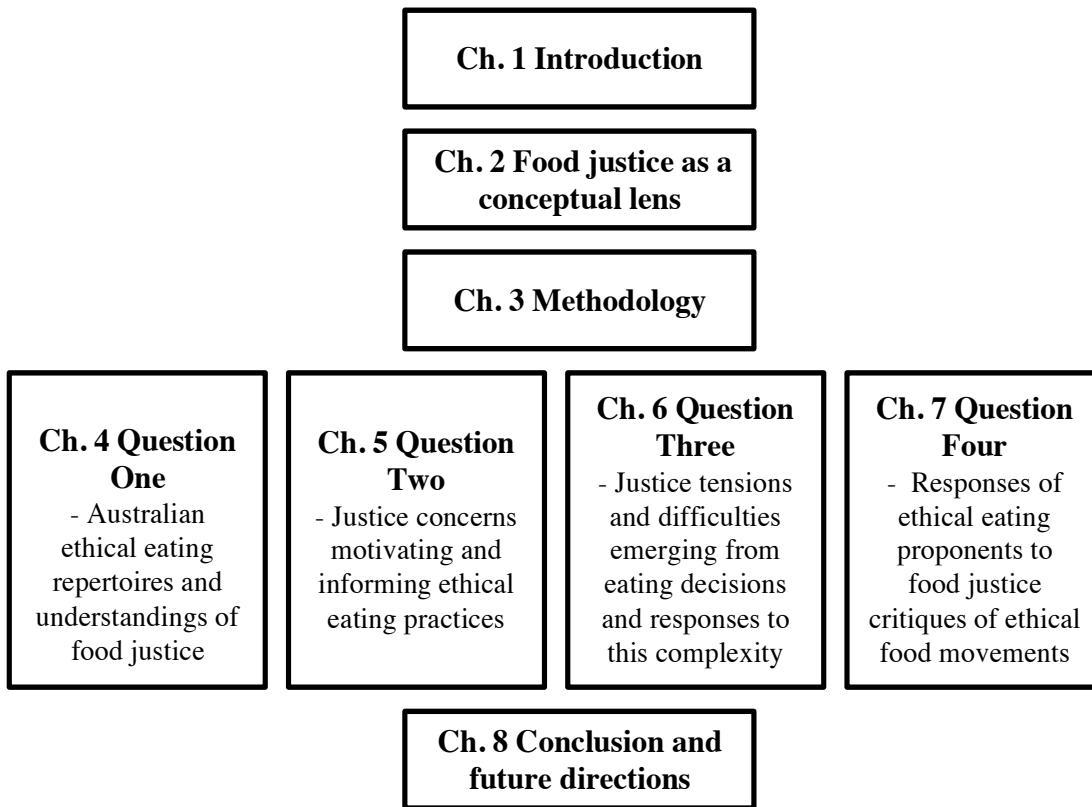
Chapter 5 examines the specific ecological, social and animal justice concerns that motivate ethical eating practices and how these relate to the Australian context.

Chapter 6 considers some of the tensions, conflicts and trade-offs that emerge from the plurality of justice concerns outlined in Chapter 5 and explores how this complexity is influencing approaches to ethical eating.

Chapter 7 focuses on how ethical eating proponents in Australia are responding to the critiques detailed in Chapter 2.

Finally, **Chapter 8** offers a conclusion and suggests some further research pathways.

Figure 3 Thesis Structure



Chapter 2 Conceptual Foundations: Food justice as a lens

2.1 Introduction

As scholarly interest in food continues to expand, ‘food justice’ is being increasingly employed as an analytical lens for examining contemporary foodways (Agyeman & McEntee 2014). Foodways are, “the cultural and social practices that affect food consumption, including how and what communities eat, where and how they shop and what motivates their food preferences” (Alkon et al. 2013: 127). This chapter draws on the existing canon of work on food justice to explain how the research questions have been informed by the literature and how a food justice lens is applied in this thesis.

Broadly understood, food justice means, “justice for all in the food system” including producers, food system workers, farm animals, consumers and communities, with a food justice frame providing “a core focus on equity and disparities and the struggles by those who are more vulnerable” (Gottlieb & Joshi 2013: ix; 223). DuPuis et al. (2011) argue that justice itself should be understood reflexively within the food justice frame as a multi-faceted and heterogeneous concept that extends from liberal egalitarian perspectives, across communitarian and culturalist understandings of justice.¹⁰ An expansive understanding of food justice recognizes the food sovereignty movement aimed at the “democratization of the food system in favor of the poor and underserved” (Holt-Giménez, 2011, 324) as part of the broad transnational movement for justice and egalitarianism within the food system.¹¹ *Food justice* and *food sovereignty* emerge as over-lapping discourses both concerned with challenging the inequities of the industrial food complex. As Holt-Giménez (2011) puts it “they are two sides of the same food movement” (320).

Adopting an expansive conception, justice is concerned not simply with issues of distribution and participation, but also with the recognition of different actors as members of a broad moral, ecological and political community and the needs underlying the capacity of these

¹⁰ See DuPuis et al. (2011) for a detailed examination of theories of justice.

¹¹ The concept of food sovereignty emerged from the International Peasant’s Movement, La Via Campesina. It is articulated as “the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems” (Nyéléni 2007, 673). While the movement has expanded beyond its agrarian origins, its core focus continues to lie with peasant farmers and small, family run farms, landless rural workers, indigenous people, rural women and youth, with a particular emphasis on food system injustices in the Majority World.

actors (including non-human actors) to function and flourish (Schlosberg 2013; 2007).¹² What this means is that justice is both multiply implicated and multiply conceived in relation to food systems and eating practices- there are multiple stakeholders and justice frames.

Drawing on its early intellectual roots in the environmental justice movement, a food justice approach also recognizes that while injustices in contemporary food systems are ubiquitous, they often manifest in more pronounced ways along lines of geography, race, ethnicity, class and gender (Gottlieb & Joshi 2013; Alkon & Agyeman 2011). This echoes common themes within the environmental justice scholarship.

Notably, the field of food justice is highly interdisciplinary, drawing on sociology, race theory, food studies, human geography, political ecology and other cognate disciplines (Alkon 2013; Alkon & Agyeman 2011; Agyeman & McEntee 2014). This diverse epistemological grounding allows for an intellectual reciprocity that is extremely valuable. It helps provide a rich literature to draw on despite the fact that the field itself is still comparatively young. Food justice establishes conceptual linkages with other forms of social justice activism that see food as a critical entry point in relation to issues they seek to address, whether it be land use planning and environmental justice, worker and indigenous rights, gender equity, immigration issues or structural racism (Gottlieb & Joshi 2013). The concept itself operates across a broad coalition of interests and stakeholders implicated in the food system. It provides a means of examining intersectionalities between diverse justice issues. Intersectionality recognizes how different oppressions and privileges can interact and build on each other (see Valentine 2007). Food justice therefore offers both a socio-spatial and intersectional lens for examining ethical food repertoires. Important elements of this lens are detailed below.

2.2 Justice motivations for eating ethically

First, at the most basic level, a ‘justice’ frame provides a useful tool for examining the motivations that underlie ethical food repertoires in Australia. Ethical food practices are responses to the perception of particular food system injustices that occur at local, regional,

¹² A more comprehensive discussion of different conceptions of justice has been a major concern of environmental justice scholarship in recent years (see Schlosberg 2013), however this discussion is beyond the scope of the current thesis.

national and transnational levels. The second thesis question asks which food injustices are being treated as ethically salient by NGOs and consumers and how justice concerns are guiding normative conceptions of eating. As noted earlier, different justice motivations may emerge from different geographic and cultural contexts.

In addition, some injustices may be treated as significant in ethical food movements, while others may be overlooked. Brown and Getz (2011) note for example that considerations of labour injustices have been relatively neglected in contemporary American food movements. Mapping the justice issues that motivate ethical food practices helps reveal whose interests are advanced and whose are neglected within particular ethical eating repertoires. A food justice lens offers a way of rendering visible the stakeholders set a place at the table in considerations of ‘ethical eating’ in Australia.

2.3 Tensions and trade-offs within eating ethically

In relation to the third thesis question, a food justice lens can be applied to help reveal the tensions, contradictions and contestations that can emerge in seeking to address injustices by eating more ethically. For example, a key concern of the food justice literature has been to problematize some of the dominant, embedded assumptions that certain ‘ethical’ food practices are inherently more just. There is a tendency within food movements to conflate the characteristics of a particular production system or food practice with its desired social or environmental outcomes (Tregear 2011; Forsell & Lankoski 2014; Cadieux & Slocum 2015). Local and organic foods, for example, are subject to certain normative assumptions, often becoming a kind of cultural shorthand for ‘ethical’ food in the popular food literature and on lifestyle television. However academic research on food justice has critiqued aspects of local and organic food movements, illustrating how a food justice lens can highlight tensions and trade-offs.

A number of authors have been critical of the scalar assumption that a local food system is more socially and environmentally just than a national or global system (Allen 2010; DuPuis & Goodman 2005; Guthman 2008a). Born and Purcell (2006) argue that, “there is nothing inherent about any scale” terming such uncritical, implicit assertions of justness, the ‘local trap’. Aside from the fact that there is no consensus about what ‘local’ actually means (Campbell et al. 2013) unreflexive assumptions about the ‘justness’ of local food can veil the trade-offs and tensions present in determining whether to ‘eat local’ (DuPuis & Goodman

2005). They may for example mask the fact that local food can sometimes be parochial, protectionist or even xenophobic and may have nothing to do with a desire for ecological or social sustainability (DuPuis & Goodman 2005; Born & Purcell 2006; Guthman 2008a; Baker 2011). Supporting farmers from one locale involves a trade-off of not supporting other farmers, perhaps even more deserving ones, from another locality (Edward-Jones et al. 2008). Uncritical localism may also occlude other practices equally important to achieving food justice on reductive scalar grounds (Born & Purcell 2006). For example, militant 'eat local' campaigns can sometimes operate at cross-purposes with Fair Trade initiatives aimed at improving social justice outcomes for poor farmers in the developing world (Morgan 2010). A food justice lens helps reveal how different justice concerns can compete with each other.

Food justice critiques of organic food also reveal how tensions can emerge from deeper investigation of the 'justness' of particular practices. Alkon's (2013) recent work argues that the romanticized, bucolic image of organic production mobilized by ethical food advocates sometimes renders invisible the "far less utopian" human element of organic food production. In the United States many organic farms utilize migrant labourers, who often suffer very poor working conditions. In idealizing images of small family farms and unprocessed foods, ethical eating advocates often "serve to metaphorically erase the presence of these workers" (Alkon & Agyeman 2011: 339). This builds on Guthman's (2003) earlier recognition that large-scale, industrial organics in the US "depends on the same system of marginalized labour as does fast food" (56). Organic production does not necessarily result in improved social or economic outcomes for farmers and farmworkers (Shreck et al. 2006). Thavat (2011) shows that the production of 'Fair Trade' organic rice in Cambodia for consumption by 'ethical eaters' in the West, while "masquerading as promoting virtuous farming practices" (287), can in fact serve to perpetuate poverty. Higher labour requirements, failure to account for unpaid family labour and reduced yields can undermine the compensatory effects of premium prices. The emergence of highly processed 'organic' food and large-scale industrial organic monocultures have also raised questions about the assumed nutritional and ecological justness of organic food (Guthman 2004; Lockie et al. 2002).

In challenging uncritical assumptions, a food justice lens helps unmask the trade-offs and tensions between competing justice concerns and between competing ethical food practices. It highlights the problematic nature of simply binding normative labels of 'good' and 'bad' food with scalar or structural assumptions; fetishizing the structural or spatial characteristics of

food systems or food practices as inherently equitable or just can cause advocates to overlook important differences in both intent and circumstance. Drawing on food justice critiques, this thesis recognizes that it is necessary to examine the context of ethical food practices rather than reify particular practices as universally synonymous with ethicality.

2.4 Problematic assumptions about the ‘choice’ to eat ethically

A food justice approach can highlight issues of inclusion and exclusion in ethical eating. It directs attention to how financial, class, social and racial asymmetries might impact on people’s ability to participate in ethical food movements. Food justice researchers focus on the ways in which people can be materially, symbolically or discursively marginalized in their food choices (see Allen & Hinrichs 2007; Guthman 2008b; Guthman 2011a; Alkon & Norgaard 2009). As Dixon (2014) notes, a master narrative of personal choice in food choices creates an identity vacuum that renders invisible the informational, cultural, financial and physical boundaries that impact lived food realities. Overlooking the positionalities influencing how people nourish themselves, can actually work to naturalize or reinforce certain inequalities (Hayes-Conroy 2010; Johnston et al. 2011; Guthman 2011). Johnston et al. (2011) argue that mapping ethical virtues onto conscientious eaters without accounting for any privileged circumstances surrounding their food choices can morally castigate those eaters whose eating practices are subject to social or structural constraints.

This challenges the implicit assumption that everyone has the same ability to choose to ‘eat ethically’ and that failure to do so is simply a failure of interest or inclination. While “[e]thics are inexpensive for middle-class shoppers” (Alison Alkon quoted in Cook et al. 2011: 107), ethical eating practices and spaces are not universally available to all consumers. Food deemed more ethical in dominant repertoires can be more expensive, sometimes prohibitively so for low-income consumers (Lea & Worsley 2005; Alkon et al. 2013). Alkon and Norgaard (2009) point out however that food choice is not just a question of economic capacity, but also of other factors that impact “who lives where and who has access to what kind of services” (300). Food justice scholars have therefore sought to reveal and unpick other structural forms of disenfranchisement that impact people’s capacity to eat in particular ways. Morales (2011) points to the trend of ‘super-market redlining’ in the US in which

corporations avoid establishing stores in lower income urban areas.¹³ Popular ethical food spaces such as farmer's markets often tend to be located in relatively well-to-do neighbourhoods increasing opportunity and travel costs for poorer consumers (Guthman 2008a). In some areas gentrification pushes up the value of land so that it becomes more difficult for communities to get access to land for community gardens (McClintock 2014).

As Porter and McIlvaine-Newsad (2013) suggest, knowing what is good to eat and having the ability to access this food are not the same thing. In omitting consideration of this distinction, ethical food movements risk creating a 'two-tier' food system offering ethical alternatives only to those who can afford them (Levkoe 2011). Elucidating the inequities embedded in 'eating ethically' can allow individuals and organisations to work towards developing means of negotiating these. McClintock (2014) points for example to the 'sliding' price scales evident at some more progressive farmers' markets that have been developed to aid financially disadvantaged members of the community in affording fresh fruit and vegetables.

As such, food justice scholars show that eating ethically involves much more than simply choosing to do so. Reducing the issue to 'voting with your fork' (see *Food Inc.* 2009) rests on the fallacy that everyone has the same capacity to cast a vote. This does not suggest that calls to eat more ethically are invalid but encourages activists and scholars not to overlook or underplay the fact that ethical eating repertoires are subject to processes of both inclusion and exclusion. They can reflect (and sometimes reinforce) wider processes of social and economic justice. It places a normative imperative on ethical food movements to actively pursue more inclusionary agendas. The fourth thesis question therefore asks whether and if so how, NGOs in Australia are dealing with criticisms regarding inequities of access to the spaces and practices of ethical eating. How are they accounting for the diversity of subjectivities, capacities and cultural histories that those seeking to eat 'more ethically' encapsulate?

2.5 Moving beyond a radical/neo-liberal dualism

Finally, it is worth noting that there is a perceived tension in the food justice literature between the radical transformative potential of ethical food movements and a concern that some practices may in fact further neo-liberal agendas (Holt-Giménez & Wang 2011; Alkon

¹³ Wealthier suburban areas are seen to provide higher profit margins, a lower incidence of thefts and fewer development obstacles (Eisenhauer 2001).

& Mares 2012). Some scholars argue that many of the ethical food practices advocated are still market-driven and therefore remain situated within a broader neo-liberal capitalist regime (Brown & Getz 2008; Allen 2008). Drawing on the concern of the oft-quoted Einsteinian aphorism - that we can't solve problems using the same kind of thinking that we used when we created them- there is uncertainty about the efficacy of "fighting capitalism with capitalism" (Allen & Hinrichs 2007: 265). Alkon (2014) points to what she sees as market-based approaches' inherently undemocratic nature - that exercising choice through the marketplace is not necessarily available to disadvantaged groups.

Yet not all advocated practices fall within a capitalist frame. Bartos (2014) points out that ethical food practices include a number of non-capitalist approaches such as food swaps and bartering and community gardening. Some writers argue however that even certain of these practices may be seen to reinforce a particular kind of neoliberal rationality, "by doing the work that was once considered the province of the state" (Alkon 2014: 30; see also Allen & Guthman 2006; Levkoe 2011; Alkon & Mares 2012). While this may certainly be true, McClintock's (2014) food justice work points out that over-zealous either/or analyses may overlook the latent revolutionary and subversive potential of such practices and that "we risk throwing out the proverbial baby with bathwater sullied by a neoliberal bogeyman" (157). He notes that there is a need to move beyond a simplistic radical/neo-liberal dualism to recognise that ethical food practices may represent "*both* a form of actually existing neo-liberalism *and* a simultaneous radical counter-movement arising in dialectical tension" (148).

This thesis therefore recognizes the need to avoid essentializing ethical eating repertoires as either radical or neo-liberal. A more nuanced approach is required. One that is also attentive to the problems of monolithic understandings of 'the economy' and of neo-liberalism itself. Cameron (2012) for example points to the often-overlooked diversity of food economies, which include alternative capitalist practices. Some alternative market practices, for example certain Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) schemes, may include more radical elements. It is therefore unfair to paint all 'market-based' food practices with the same neo-liberal brush. Further, Lerner (2003) points to the fact that there are "multiple neoliberalisms" that can themselves contain contradictions. In trying to subsume practices into overly-simplified categories we risk obscuring the complexity and diversity of the processes involved.

2.6 Conclusion

In this thesis, a food justice approach is used to examine how justice is implicated in ethical eating repertoires on multiple levels. A ‘justice’ optic is used to reveal motivations for ethical eating and help make clear who and what ethical eaters are seeking justice for. It also highlights how unreflexive assumptions about both the practices and subjects of ethical eating can serve to mask complexities embedded in ethical eating repertoires. It ensures a critical approach to ethical food movements, exploring how inequities or injustices can unintentionally manifest in their own practices or rhetoric. Anguelovski (2015) argues that in this way food justice work parallels that of environmental justice a few decades ago, which challenged the failure by traditional environmental organisations to consider how their work could actually result in injustices for or fail to resonate with certain communities. Subjecting ethical food movements to critical reflection helps reveal new opportunities to advance them, including where possibilities for collaboration exist and how obstacles can be overcome.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter details the methodological approach to data collection and analysis used and its rationale. This thesis adopts a multi-method qualitative approach informed by grounded theory to examine the complex dynamics of ethical eating, including the nuanced meanings, motives and experiences that inform ethical eating discourse and practice. While it doesn't generate statistically representative data, it gathers perspectives and conceptions that offer an "interpretive understanding of the empirical phenomenon" (Charmaz 2009: 139) of ethical eating using a food justice lens. Although a quantitative approach may have offered a more generalisable picture, it would not have captured the subtleties regarding the practices and subjects of ethical eating that the research questions warrant. In the following sections I explain my approach, the particular methods used, and my positionality as a researcher.

3.2 Approach

This thesis employs a methodology informed by constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz 2008; 2009; Mills et al. 2006). The characterising feature of the grounded theory method is that it aims to develop understanding by inductively examining the phenomenon in question, rather than deducing hypotheses from extant theories (Charmaz 2011; Corbin & Strauss 2008; Glaser & Strauss 1967). It encourages an iterative process of data coding and analysis to allow for construction of meaningful, interpretative concepts that emerge from and are 'grounded' in the data (Charmaz 2008). This coding and analysis occurs concurrently with data collection (Corbin & Strauss 2008). A constructivist epistemological frame recognizes that meaning is not 'discovered' by an objective observer but is co-constructed from the dialectic between the inquirer and the inquired into; researcher positionality will impact the research process and product (Charmaz 2009; Mills et al. 2006). A grounded theory approach of this kind has successfully been used elsewhere in examining contemporary agrifood movements using a critical food justice focus (Alkon & Mares 2012; Alkon & McCullen 2011). Grounded theory's emphasis on rich and contextualized understanding fits well with the notion that ethical eating and food justice issues need to be spatially and socially situated.

Grounded theory encourages the use of multiple sources of data (Charmaz 2011). In this thesis three forms of data collection were employed. Firstly, web and campaign materials advocating ethical eating were collected from 46 key food, environmental, social justice and animal welfare NGOs from across Australia. Content analysis was applied to explore how ethical eating is being promoted at a national level. Secondly, interviews with representatives from 13 of the most influential of these organisations were conducted to explore the research questions in greater detail and help reveal the motivations and complexities within NGO experiences. Finally, consumer focus groups (CFGs) with self-identified environmentalists were conducted to provide a snapshot of how a subset of consumers are engaging with ethical eating repertoires. In comparison to the national scale NGO analysis, CFGs enabled examination of ethical eating repertoires at a more personal or community scale. Different data collection strategies therefore allowed analysis of ethical eating repertoires at different scales of action. Having multiple sources of information also allowed for triangulation of data to better ensure the strength of the research findings (Greene 2014).

Each data component is treated in more detail in the following three sections while section 3.6 outlines the forms of data analysis utilized. Section 3.7 explores how my own positionality has been accounted for in the thesis methodology.

3.3 Website analysis

Analysis of website and online campaign material from 46 key NGOs advocating ethical food behaviours in Australia was undertaken to provide an overview of the ethical eating messages being promoted. The organisations were located across Australia and were categorised as having a particular focus on environmental concerns (17), animal rights/welfare (6), food/consumption (17) or social justice (6). See Table 1 below for a list of organisations. Examining ethical eating repertoires being engaged at a national scale allows differences and similarities that emerge at a country level to be interrogated. Understanding the national dynamic is also important in relation to the development of food and nutrition policy at the federal level.

Organisations were identified through internet searches, organisational listings and verbal recommendations. While they do not represent an exhaustive list, the sample captures many

of the key organisations influencing consumer understandings of ethical eating. However, small organisations without an online presence were not included in this sample. Such organisations are nonetheless important in influencing ethical eating repertoires, particularly at community scales. Material was uploaded into the NVivo qualitative data analysis programme between September and December 2014 and coded as described at section 3.6. Any additional material or changes made after December 2014 were not captured in the analysis.

Table 1 List of organisations included in analysis

Food/Consumption (17)	Environmental (17)	Animal (6)	Social Justice (6)
Youth Food Movement	WWF	Animals Australia	Oxfam
Sustainable Table	Greenpeace	Animal liberation VIC (ACT, NSW, Qld, SA)	World Vision
Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance	1 Million Women	PETA	Salvation Army
Sydney Food Fairness Alliance	Australian Conservation Foundation	Voiceless	Do Something (Foodwise)
Consume with Care	Australian Marine Conservation Society	RSPCA	Baptist World Aid Australia
Ethical Consumer Group	Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC)	Humane Society	Fair Trade Association ANZ
Ethical Consumers Australia	Environment Victoria		
Slow Food Australia	Friends of the Earth		
Vegetarian Victoria	CERES		
Australian Vegetarian Society	HOPE		
Australian Farmers' Market Association	Eco-shout		
Cultivating Community	Marine Stewardship Council		
EcoFriendlyFood	Nature Conservation Council NSW		
Meat and Livestock Australia	Planet Ark		
True Food Network	Seed Savers Network		
Vegan Society NSW	Borneo Orangutan Survival Australia		
Vegan Australia	The Jane Goodall Institute Australia		

3.4 Interviews

Website analysis was supplemented with detailed interviews with representatives of 13 organisations. Travel and time constraints limited the number of interviews that could be undertaken. Interviews took place in Sydney and Melbourne between October 2014 and January 2015. Sampling for interview informants was purposive, with those selected

representing some of the most visible and influential organisations active in this space.¹⁴ The focus on organisations based in Sydney and Melbourne was reflective of both practical considerations and the fact that many of the highest profile organisations are based in these cities. Informants were approached from organisations with different foci (animal welfare, food/consumption, environmental, social justice) so a diversity of perspectives were captured (see Appendix A for non-identifiable interview details). Where organisations had a broad mandate, efforts were made to interview representatives who were directly responsible for food-related advocacy and campaign work.

Interviews were conducted face-to-face unless prevented by logistical constraints, in which case they were conducted via Skype. They lasted on average half an hour and were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim to allow for analysis using NVivo software. They were semi-structured, with some key questions being asked across all interviews (see Appendix B). This allowed for greater flexibility in further probing interesting responses. The Human Research Ethics Committee approved all interview protocols used. Consistent with ethics requirements interviewed organisations are not identified. The information and consent form used is included at Appendix C.

3.5 Focus groups

Four semi-structured CFGs were conducted with self-identified environmentalists in Sydney in November 2014 to investigate their understanding of ethical eating. While daily practices, including food practices, may be subject to unconscious habit and routine, Beagan et al. (2010: 755) note that, “[e]thical food consumption is likely to operate at the discursive level, where self-aware, self-conscious choices can be articulated.” This means that consumers are able to articulate what practices they understand as more ethical, what justice concerns underlie these and what tensions and conflicts they confront in determining how and what to eat. CFGs are a valuable tool for examining how understanding and perceptions are constructed and articulated (Kitzinger & Barbour 1999) and for identifying subtle nuances in meaning (Stewart & Shamdasani 2014).

¹⁴ Organisations elected included those with high profile public campaigns concerning ethical eating, a significant media presence and a large support base.

Previous research suggests that environmentalists are more open to lifestyle change (Stern, Dietz & Guagnano 1995). This, coupled with the higher chance of exposure to some of the dominant ecologically-framed discourses on ethical eating, means that environmentalists are likely to be early adopters of certain ethical food consumption practices. Focusing on self-identified environmentalists also allowed for investigation of possible tensions raised between motivations regarding ecological sustainability and other motivations such as social justice concerns.

Participants were recruited using snowball sampling (Rice & Ezzy 1999; Bryman 2012), initially drawing on my own network. Participants were also recruited through advertisements distributed among community environmental groups¹⁵ and displayed in suitable public locations such as on Macquarie University campus notice boards (see Appendix D). A total of 21 individuals took part (12 female, 9 male; aged 18-64; see Table 2 for participant demographics). The participants are not meant to be representative of the broader Sydney population – instead they provide a snapshot of how some consumers are responding to ethical eating debates. The majority of participants had a university level education, reflecting the particular recruitment strategy and the positive correlation between education and environmental concern (Jones & Dunlap 1992). While CFG participants had a diverse array of cultural backgrounds there were no Indigenous Australian perspectives and, with one exception, participants also reflected a largely urban background.

¹⁵ Environmental groups included the Willoughby Environment Protection Agency (WEPA), Australian Youth Climate Coalition (AYCC), Permaculture Sydney, Sustainability Street and the University of New South Wales student sustainability group.

Table 2 Focus group participant demographics

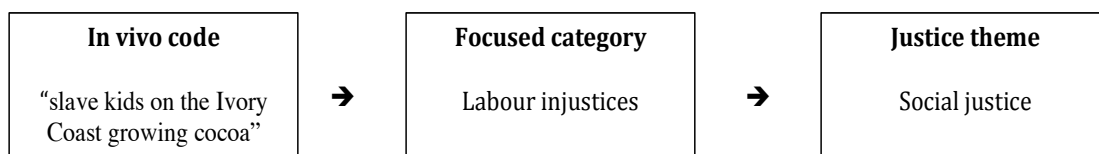
Focus Group	Sex	Age Range	Occupation	Household income bracket	Highest level of education achieved
1	M	35-49	Volunteer researcher	\$25, 000 to \$49, 999	Post-graduate qualification
1	F	25-34	Graphic designer	\$50, 000 to \$99, 999	University degree
1	M	18-24	Student	Prefer not to state	University degree
1	F	18-24	Legal editor	\$50, 000 to \$99, 999	University degree
1	F	18-24	Hospitality/ freelance designer	\$100, 000 or more	University degree
2	F	25-34	Legal publishing	\$100, 000 or more	University degree
2	M	18-24	Student	\$100, 000 or more	Completed Yr 12
2	M	18-24	Motion designer	\$100, 000 or more	University degree
2	F	18-24	student	\$50, 000 to \$99, 999	University degree
2	M	25-34	IT	\$50, 000 to \$99, 999	University degree
3	F	25-34	Bush regenerator	\$25, 000 to \$49, 999	University degree
3	M	50-64	Accountant	\$50, 000 to \$99, 999	Post-graduate qualification
3	M	25-34	Ecologist	\$50, 000 to \$99, 999	Post-graduate qualification
3	F	25-34	Student	\$50, 000 to \$99, 999	University degree
3	F	18-24	Student	\$100, 000 or more	Tafe or technical college
4	F	18-24	Student	Prefer not to state	Completed Yr 12
4	F	25-34	Product Services coordinator	\$25, 000 to \$49, 999	University degree
4	M	18-24	PhD candidate	\$25, 000 to \$49, 999	University degree
4	M	25-34	Pharmacist	\$50, 000 to \$99, 999	Post-graduate qualification
4	F	35-49	Student	\$25, 000 to \$49, 999	University degree
4	F	25-34	PhD candidate	\$25, 000 to \$49, 999	University degree

The CFGs took place at Macquarie University campus. Each session consisted of 5 - 6 participants and lasted for an hour and half. Sessions sought to reveal individual knowledge and perceptions about ethical eating and associated justice concerns with open-ended questions (see Appendix E). Again, the sessions were semi-structured so that while key questions could be asked the conversation was able to develop according to participant interests (Bryman 2012). They were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis using NVivo. As with the interviews, protocols used were approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee. In accordance with ethics approval, participants have been allocated pseudonyms in relation to quotations used in this thesis. The information and consent form used for the CFGs is included at Appendix F.

3.6 Data analysis

All NGO web/campaign content and interview/CFG transcripts were uploaded into NVivo. Consistent with a grounded theory style approach to analysis (Charmaz 2011; 2009; Glaser & Strauss 1967) the resultant data set was coded iteratively, following multiple close-readings of the material. While initial codes were generally ‘in vivo’ (ie. in the NGOs/participants own words), as analysis proceeded more focused codes became collated into researcher-defined categories. The emergent codes/categories were grouped according to thematic features and key patterns, linkages and any apparent aberrations were identified and interrogated. The array of specific justice issues underlying ethical eating practices identified by both NGOs and CFG participants, for example, were grouped under ecological, social and animal justice themes. A simple coding example is illustrated at Figure 4 below:

Figure 4 Coding example



A key strength of a grounded theory informed method is that data collection and preliminary analysis occur simultaneously, such that information gathered in earlier interviews and CFGs helped inform later ones (Charmaz 2011). Ongoing content analysis of NGO material was very useful in helping shape the CFG and interview questions used.

3.7 Accounting for my own positionality

As previously noted, a constructivist approach recognises that researcher positionality impacts data collection and interpretation. Researchers are not neutral observers, but bring their own positionality to their research projects (Greene 2014). Positionality “refers to the understanding that our lived experiences, particularly those of race, class, and gender, shape our worldviews” (Alkon & Agyeman 2011: 3). The call for reflexivity that emerges from a food justice focus extends beyond the food movements themselves and applies equally to those researchers seeking to examine them. An important part of the methodological approach undergirding this research then was being cognizant of and accounting for the way

that my own experiences and my social location influence both the way research participants might interact with me and the way I might interpret the data.

Panelli (2004) states that all researchers are writing ‘from somewhere’. In terms of my own social location, as a white, well-off, well-educated female, I am a member of a privileged socio-demographic class in terms of my own food choices (see Guthman 2008a). I have a degree of familiarity with some of the dominant ethical eating repertoires through my own personal engagement with them. I have a backyard veggie garden and worm farm. I’m a member of a local permaculture group. I’ve attended seed swaps and backyard chicken workshops. A growing ecological concern encouraged me to adopt vegetarianism. I also frequent weekly farmers markets and food co-ops and I’m lucky enough to live nearby to a certified organic grocer. These engagements affirm my own ‘insider’ status – as a researcher I’m on the inside looking in (Greene 2014). This *a priori* knowledge and experience regarding some of the ethical food repertoires in Australia has the potential to yield rich autoethnographic insight but also introduces the need to ensure that interpretations of the data are not simply unexamined artifacts of my own positionality.

One means of addressing this is for researchers to explicitly engage with and interrogate their assumptions in a self-reflexive manner throughout the research process by writing personal reflectives (Van den Hoonaard 2002). Memos and a reflection log were therefore used both as an *aide-mémoire* and to help scrutinize my own underlying assumptions throughout the research processes.¹⁶ This, combined with the use of food justice as a research lens, with its own critiques about unreflexive assumptions regarding ethical eating, acted as a means of self-triangulation in examining my positionality. In addition the grounded theory approach of analyzing ‘upward’ from coded data, rather than using predetermined themes or a pre-formulated theory of how issues might manifest helps minimize the risk of uncritically replicating existing or personal perspectives. Such methodological choices help ensure a more reflexive approach, however it is important to note that my own positionality within ethical food movements has inevitably influenced the founding presumption of this thesis- that we need to eat more ethically. While I offer a critique of ethical eating messaging and practice, it

¹⁶ Both review of the literature and discussion with consumers in the focus groups provoked reflection on the fact that many sourcing and consumption practices I engage in personally involve trade-offs that were sometimes masked by my own normative assumptions. I had failed, for example, to previously consider the environmental tensions associated with scaled-up, monoculture organics.

is a caring one, that doesn't challenge the idea that changes to contemporary consumption practices are necessary.

3.8 Conclusion

This multi-method qualitative approach canvassed a wide range of understandings and perspectives from different actors and gathered a rich body of empirical data within the relatively short project timeframe. It provides insights on national scale processes, as well as on more individual or community scale enactments. It is not representative but reveals some detail about how national messages are interpreted and mobilized at a more personal level. However, open coding is a time consuming process, which means there were limits to the number of NGO interviews and CFGs that could be included. A larger number of both would have been useful to help capture a greater diversity of experiences. Despite such limitations, grounded theory style analysis requires researchers to keep an open mind and allows the pursuit of unexpected directions of inquiry, which is particularly useful for an exploratory study of this kind.

Chapter 4 Ethical eating repertoires and a just food system

4.1 Introduction

This chapter turns to the first thesis question and examines the ethical eating repertoires engaged by influential NGOs and self-identified environmentalists in Australia. It details some of the key behaviours and discourses that form part of these ethical eating repertoires. The first section overviews the ethical eating practices advocated by 46 key NGOs and compares these with the practices identified by CFG participants. The following two sections then describe some important understandings of food justice that inform the discourse and language of these ethical eating repertoires; first, justice as fairness and second, justice through (re)connection. This helps build a picture of what certain actors understand as ethical eating and some of the key food justice frames being employed in these repertoires.

4.2 Ethical eating practices

This section outlines the ethical eating practices promoted by NGOs and enacted by self-identified environmentalists, that form part of Australian ethical eating repertoires. What emerges is a diverse and dynamic ethical food landscape with multiple interpretations of ‘eating ethically’.

Table 3 shows the ethical food behaviours advocated by 46 key NGOs, ordered within behaviour categories. Table 4 shows the ethical food behaviours identified by CFG participants, with different iterations of practices indicated where relevant. The practices identified as ethical across the two groups extended from where food is sourced and from whom, to dietary and purchasing choices and how food is treated, cooked and eaten.

Table 3 Ethical food behaviours advocated by NGOs

Practice Advocated	No. of Organisations
Where/from whom food is sourced	
Eat Local (different definitions of local)	23
Shop at farmers' markets	20
Grow/Raise your Own	19
Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)	17
Shop at Food Co-Ops	10
Buy Direct /Farm Gate	7
Food swaps	7
Support small-scale/family farms	6
Foraging/Hunting	2
What food is bought/grown/eaten	
Eat Seasonal	21
Eat Organic/Biodynamic	21
Buy Higher welfare	19
Eat less meat/dairy (animal products)	19
Eat sustainable seafood (certification/sustainable species)	19
Buy Fair Trade	12
Eat less processed/junk food	11
Go Vegan	10
Go Vegetarian	8
Avoid GMOs	8
Avoid bottled water	7
Buy sustainable palm oil (RSPO certified) products	7
Avoid Palm Oil	5
Buy or grow heritage breeds/varieties	3
Eat bush/native foods	2
Breastfeed	1
How food is treated	
Reduce Food Waste	23
Green food preparation (energy saving appliances, efficient storage, green cooking methods etc)	5
Other behaviours	
Seed Saving	5
Support Food Hubs/Community Kitchens	2

Table 4 Ethical food behaviours identified by focus group participants

Practice Identified	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
Where/from whom food is sourced				
Buying from local butcher/ greengrocer	✓	✓	✓	
Eating Local (differing definitions)	✓		✓	✓
Grow your own	✓		✓	✓
Shopping at farmers' markets			✓	✓
Avoiding major supermarket chains			✓	
Hunting/foraging			✓	
Gleaning			✓	
What food is bought/grown/eaten				
Eating organic/ chemical free/ biodynamic	✓ Organic Avoiding GMOs	✓ Chemical/ pesticide free	✓ Organic /biodynamic	✓ Organic Avoiding GMOs
Higher welfare	✓	✓	✓	✓
Vegetarianism/ Veganism	✓ Vegetarianism/ veganism	✓ Vegetarianism	✓ Vegetarianism pescatarianism	✓ Vegetarianism/ veganism
Avoiding processed foods	✓		✓	✓
Eating fewer animal products	✓ - Eating less meat/ more vegetarian meals		✓ - Eating less meat/ meat- free day	✓ - Eating less meat/ dairy/ fewer eggs
Fair Trade	✓	✓		✓
Sustainable seafood	✓	✓	✓	
Avoiding palm oil	✓		✓	
Sustainable palm oil	✓			
Avoiding own-brand products	✓			
Eating seasonally			✓	
Selecting meats with less environmental impact	✓ - Chicken over beef/ kangaroo			
Eating heritage breeds/varieties	✓			
Eating crops that help bees			✓	
How food is treated				
Reducing food waste	✓ -Appropriate portion sizes -Consume less -Eating imperfect produce - Avoiding packaging	✓ - Not over- consuming - Using leftovers - Avoiding packaging	✓ -Eating everything - Reducing use of plastic bags/Using eco-bags - Avoiding packaging	✓ - Not over- consuming - Eating imperfect produce - Recycling plastic bags -Composting/ worm farm - Avoiding packaging
Energy saving cooking practices				✓ - Cooking more and freezing for later use

The repertoires included both boycott and buycott style practices. Boycott type practices are related to avoidance of particular kinds of foodstuffs, such as genetically modified organisms (GMOs) or bottled water.¹⁷ Buycott type approaches are related to intentional purchases of foods such as those using sustainable palm oil. A number of practices such as eating local, shopping at farmers' markets, buying direct, supporting CSA schemes and growing your own, were tied to the notion of provenance knowledge; knowing the source of the food and the methods used in producing it.

In addition to consumerist approaches to eating ethically both in terms of conventional supermarket purchases and alternative market engagements such as farmers' markets, a number of non-capitalist ethical food provisioning practices were also present. These included bartering and food swaps, foraging, hunting, gleaning¹⁸ and backyard and community gardening. Repertoires of ethical eating can therefore be situated within a 'diverse economies' framework that contemplates a much wider and more lively array of practices being used to 'take back' the food economy than the traditional capitalist enterprises and market transactions often spotlighted (Cameron 2012; Cameron & Wright 2014; Gibson-Graham et al. 2013).

Waste reduction emerged as the ethical food practice identified most often by both NGOs and CFG participants.¹⁹ In CFGs wasting food was seen as particularly egregious with participants lamenting the loss of the 'waste not, want not' mentality of some previous generations and stressing that "food shouldn't be a disposable thing" (Michael, CFG 1). Turner (2014) notes that there has been a rising awareness of food waste issues in Australia over the last couple of years.

While eating seasonally, eating local, shopping at farmers' markets and growing your own were commonly advocated by NGOs, these practices were not as frequently identified in CFGs. In CFGs there was much greater emphasis on buying organic, higher welfare and less

¹⁷ While avoiding bottled water can be seen as part of reducing food waste, a number of organisations viewed it as a separate behaviour. It is included separately here in view of its identification as a priority action for making Australian food practice more ecologically sustainable (Pearson et al. 2014).

¹⁸ Gleaning includes the practice of 'dumpster diving' in which food discarded in supermarket, greengrocer, bakery or even restaurant dumpster bins is collected for personal consumption (Edwards & Mercer 2007).

¹⁹ Although treated as a single category here, it can be divided into a number of more specific practices such as not over-consuming, avoiding packaging waste, using leftovers, 'nose to tail' eating, donating or sharing excess food, storing food appropriately to prevent spoilage and composting unavoidable food waste.

processed products, with the majority of participants citing these. One possible explanation is that these practices involve less effort. They can easily be engaged in at conventional supermarkets, where the majority of Australians still source their food. Indeed Clare, who sometimes shopped at farmers' markets, noted that convenience was the key reason for not doing so more often:

[I]deally I'd like to shop at farmers' markets all the time, but sometimes the only time I can get to the shop would be 9pm on a Thursday or something and then I'll just run and grab Woolies stuff.²⁰

CSA schemes were commonly advocated by a number of food/consumption and environmental NGOs, but were not linked to more ethical eating in CFGs. Markow et al. (2014) comment that CSA schemes are relatively new to Australia and may be less well-known by consumers.²¹

Vegetarianism/veganism were emphasized more in CFGs than among NGOs. This may simply be a result of the fact that a high number of vegetarians/vegans were captured in the sample. Some food NGOs did note however that they were cautious about promoting vegetarian/vegan diets too heavily:

[T]here are some incredible not-for-profits doing fantastic things in a similar space, but what we felt, was that sometimes because they're so far left, they can be a little alienating for the masses. So things like, we've always been really clear on not pushing vegetarianism and veganism too heavily because we feel like if we can start a conversation with the people who eat meat everyday we're going to make more of a difference (Interview 6, Melb).

In contrast, reducing the amount of animal products consumed was commonly advocated by NGOs and identified by a number of CFG participants. Participants cited specific campaigns such as Do Something's 'Meat-Free Monday' (see Appendix G for list of food campaigns referenced in CFGs).

²⁰ This issue of convenience is interesting in view of the fact that women are often largely responsible for the provisioning of family meals (Cairns et al. 2010). There is a possible gendered dimension in terms of who devotes the time to and does the 'work' of pursuing more ethical eating practices. While beyond the scope of this analysis, the way in which ethical eating repertoires in Australia intersect with traditional gender inequalities in the home, warrants further exploration.

²¹ CSA schemes use a subscriber or shareholder/community owned model and are seen to help minimize risks for producers. In Australia they include weekly veggie/fruit box schemes such as the Purple Pear CSA in NSW, the Jupiter Creek Farm CSA in South Australia and the Melton and Transition Farm CSAs in Victoria. Some CSA schemes focus on other products such as meat or eggs. The Jonai CSA in Victoria for example, asks consumers to subscribe, on a 6 or 12-month basis, to a monthly delivery of meat.

Reducing or eschewing consumption more generally was emphasized in relation to a number of behaviours including waste reduction, electing for ‘less but better’ and growing your own. A number of CFG participants and NGOs stressed a ‘need not greed’ attitude as an important element in repertoires of ethical eating. One NGO was cautious of “she’ll be right” solutions noting that simply buying ‘better’ failed to recognise the underlying problem of rampant consumerism:

[P]eople seem to band aid the problem of too much and say just go and buy organic and just go and buy free-range...our message is also, do we need to be consuming at the current rate of consumption? (Interview 13, Syd).

This speaks to Carrier’s (2010) argument that ‘ethical’ consumerism, regardless of whether your coffee purchased is organic, local, Fair Trade or shade grown, may inadvertently contribute to the problem of commodity fetishism and the notion that we can ‘buy’ our way out of problematic consumption. In response to such concerns, ethical consumption may take the form of anti-consumerism (Humphrey 2010). Some NGOs advocated living more simply, “being more humble” (Interview 13, Syd) and sometimes forgoing certain purchases. Ethical eating repertoires were therefore concerned not just with what we buy into, but also how much we buy or indeed, whether we should buy at all.

Building on this view of the practices advocated and enacted as part of ethical eating repertoires, the two ensuing sections discuss some of the emergent themes that frame understandings of food justice within these repertoires.

4.3 Justice as fairness

A key theme that emerged in relation to ethical eating repertoires being engaged by both actors was the notion of ‘justice as fairness’. In describing the ethical eating practices they understood as contributing to a more just food system, both CFG participants and organisations often articulated issues of food justice in terms of fairness or used the terms just and fair interchangeably. One food organization representative explained:

[A] fair food system is a just food system or a system in which there is justice for everybody, right across the food system, looking at farmers, looking at how animals are treated, and what happens to the land and then questions and issues of equity and

access to good food for low income groups, fair pricing structures... Justice is to me, I link it to notions of equality and I link that to ideas of fairness, and so fair treatment, which I would juxtapose to an unfair or unjust food system, which is what we have at the moment. (Interview 8, Melb).

An environmental organization with a particular focus on climate issues suggested that food justice requires “fair food for everyone” (Interview 10, Syd). Another stated that a just food system is, “a fair food system. So that means...fair to the farmer, fair to the animal, good for our health...” (Food organization, interview 6, Melb). Jason similarly articulated that for him justice meant, “fair on the people that produce it, fair on the environment that’s providing it and fair on the consumer.” In a different session, Michael voiced the linkage between fairness and food justice as a question, “I mean where’s the fairness? Justice is about the fairness, right?”

In Australia ‘fairness’ has particular discursive resonance and rhetorical appeal. The concept of ‘fairness’ is seen as a core element of Australian cultural identity, part of the egalitarian ethos Australians like to associate with themselves.²² Having a ‘fair go’ and being ‘fair dinkum’ are familiar terms in the Australian cultural and political vernacular. The same food organisation representative that linked justice to notions of equality and fairness noted that the organisation had deliberately elected to use the term ‘fair’ in its policy documents and public communications on the grounds that there was a more intuitive understanding of what fair food meant in Australia:

In our culture, fair is something, you know, most Australians would have a pretty good idea of what fairness is (Interview 8, Melb).

While Australians have a linguistic familiarity with ‘fairness’, there remains a question as to whether this use is more than idiomatic? Even among groups that organized themselves around different (often overlapping but sometimes competing) discourses of food security, food democracy or food sovereignty, ‘fair food’ was viewed as “our form of food justice” (Interview 12, skype) and supplied a sort of unifying language in ethical eating repertoires. An important area for future investigation then is how this lexical bridge is impacting on and providing potentialities for the cohesiveness of ethical food movements in Australia.

²² In a recent galaxy survey, young Australians rated fairness as the most important national value. See RESULTS Australia (2015). *Iconic Australian ‘Fair Go’ Under Threat*, 23 February. <<http://www.results.org.au/iconic-australian-fair-go-threat/>>.

4.4 Justice through (re)connection

Another key theme that emerged in relation to ethical eating repertoires was the idea that a more just (or fair) food system required a reconnection of consumers with their food's origins. Many of the organisations and participants saw food system injustices as being grounded in a 'disconnect'. One interviewee explained:

[The capitalist food system] is premised on a series of alienations or disconnections in which people are disconnected from the source of their food and there's a cascading series of not knowing about the conditions... there's just like a mass disconnect...these distanced, anonymised, market relationships where nobody knows where the food has come from, or how it's grown or what it's done, or what they've been paid or what that means" (Food NGO, interview 8, Melb).

This disconnection is what Berry refers to as a kind of 'cultural amnesia' in which eating has simply become a 'purely commercial' and 'purely appetitive' transaction (1992: 375-76). Some organisations bemoaned a kind of 'gastro-anomie' (Fischler 1979) resulting from this disconnect in which consumers had lost a culture of food that imbued eating with meaning as an act that connected people to each other and to the environment.

McKenzie, in discussing how she sought to eat ethically, commented, "it's really easy to lose that connection ...re-establishing that connection to where food comes from is really important." In almost identical terms some organizations stress the need for ethical eating practices to "reconnect people with where their food comes from" (Sustainable Table 2015) or to "connect people to how food is grown" (Youth Food Movement 2015). Pottinger (2013) points out that 'connection' has emerged as a central theme in discourses of ethical consumption.

Among a number of food organisations in particular, this notion of 'reconnection' underscored the need to see food as more than just a commodity, highlighting a relational understanding of eating as an eco-social act. One interviewee opined, "It's all about community and connection" (Interview 6, Melb); in eating we become part of a community that extends outwards. Food wasn't conceived simply as an object of consumption, but rather as bundle of relationships. Knowing 'the story behind the food' meant rendering visible the

relational intimacies and connections embedded in eating and the injustices obscured by the disconnect. Ethical eating practices associated with community food systems such as buying from farmers' markets, CSA schemes and community gardens were seen as particularly important in 'reconnecting' eaters.

Such relational understandings of ethical eating might be extended to embrace 'more-than-human' relationalities (Haraway 2008), recognizing our interdependencies with non-human animals, ecological communities and processes. Indeed there were glimmers of this with one interviewee talking about the need for a philosophy of ethical eating, "which broadens out our anthropocentric view... starting to think about the life of the other beings that we have contact with in a daily way" (Interview 4, Melb). While Johnston (2008) argues that the disconnect results in a "profound anthropocentrism" an expansive relational understanding of eating founded on the notion of 'reconnection' may serve as a corrective to this. Re-connecting eaters to the people, animals, places and ecological systems involved in producing their food emerged as a key understanding of 'food justice' employed in the ethical eating repertoires being engaged.

4.5 Conclusion

The ethical eating repertoires revealed in this research encompassed a diverse array of behaviours and understandings. Engagements with ethical eating extended beyond those practices I am personally familiar with and which are advocated in popular texts. The sometimes divergent (but equally valid) strategies reflect a more expansive approach to eating ethically than I began this research with. Although overlaps exist between the repertoires being engaged by NGOs and CFG participants, with reducing food waste being the practice most commonly identified by both, there were also some notable differences. Certain practices prioritized by NGOs such as eating seasonally, shopping at farmers' markets, growing your own and supporting CSA, were much less common among CFGs. Such practices demand greater commitment on the part of the consumer, reflecting how non-ethical considerations such as convenience can influence the repertoires being enacted by consumers. While the practices identified by both groups form part of a broad repertoire of ethical eating in Australia, these variations illustrate how different actors may draw selectively from and engage different elements of this in their own particular repertoires.

One key commonality is that both NGOs and CFG participants employed concepts of fairness, (re)connection and relationality as part of their ethical eating repertoires. These help frame interpretations of food justice in Australia- a more just food system is a fairer and more connected one. Understanding what the ethical eating repertoires being engaged by these two groups look like and how they are articulated lays the foundations for consideration of the specific justice issues implicated in them in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 5 Justice for?

5.1 Introduction

Drawing on Chapter 4's snapshot of ethical eating repertoires, this chapter turns to the second thesis question and examines the variety of justice motivations underlying the ethical eating practices identified. While the second part of Chapter 4 explores how 'fairness' and '(re)connection/relationality' broadly frame understandings of food justice within these repertoires, this chapter delves into the justice issues that particular behaviours respond to. The practices identified in Tables 3 and 4 are underpinned by a complex matrix of justice (or fairness) concerns that are seen to affect a multiplicity of stakeholders. Some motivations are specific to justice issues emerging from the Australian context and emphasize the need for contextual understandings of ethical eating. Some relate to concern for stakeholders in developing countries, for future generations and for non-human others, indicating an expansive conception of food justice. They extend across themes of ecological, social and animal justice – each of which will be considered in turn.

5.2 Ecological justice

Ecological justice issues are those that stem from the negative environmental impacts of the contemporary food system. Such issues underpinned twenty-two of the ethical food practices identified by NGOs and CFG participants (see Appendix H for overview). Environmental concerns were articulated in terms of both injustices to ecological communities and environmental systems and injustices to human communities resulting from ecological degradation. One social justice organization stressed the fact that ecological attrition "only further entrenches human inequalities" (Interview 9, Syd).

Ethical food practices were motivated by concerns about soil degradation, air pollution, water pollution from pesticides, fertilizers and animal effluent, habitat and biodiversity loss (including genetic diversity) and resource depletion, particularly overuse of scarce water resources in Australia. Environmental injustices were sometimes talked about in intergenerational terms. For example, eating sustainable certified seafood was seen as response to a concern for future generations. A number of organisations stressed the need to

“safeguard seafood supplies for future generations” (Marine Stewardship Council 2013), “preserve fish populations for future generations” (Sustainable Table 2013) or “ensure future generations have access to a fantastic range of seafood” (Greenpeace Australia Pacific, Mahto 2014).

Climate justice emerged as a key motivating factor in ethical eating repertoires for both NGOs and CFG participants. It underpinned a number of ethical food practices including waste reduction, eating fewer animal products, vegetarian and vegan diets and electing seasonal, local and less processed food. For some organisations, such as the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC) and 1 Million Women (1MW), it was the focal issue around which their engagements with food practices were organized. A number drew attention to the particular inequity they saw in the fact that climatic disturbance will “effect the poor more than the rich” (Food organization, interview 3, Syd). Another interviewee noted that, “it impacts those poor people the most who are least responsible for causing it” (Environmental organization, interview 1, Syd). CFGs and NGOs also emphasized the fact that food security, both in Australia and globally, “will become a bigger problem in the future with climate change” (Michael, CFG 1). While it is unsurprising that there was a high degree of concern about climate change impacts of food practices among the cohort of self-identified environmentalists, it would be interesting to examine how strong this motivation might be among a broader group of ethical eaters. As increasing attention is placed on food-climate change nexus, climate justice will likely grow as an important element underlying ethical eating repertoires in Australia.

5.3 Social Justice

Social justice motivations concerned with other unpalatable aspects of the industrial food system were cited in relation to 19 of the ethical eating practices identified by NGOs and CFG participants. They related to concerns such as corporate power consolidation, unfair outcomes for producers and food system workers and food insecurity.

Eating organic food, for example, was seen as a response to the justice issues related to corporate control of genetic modification (GM) technologies and the negative impacts of this for farmers. Jason noted:

What concerns me more about GMO is the ability to patent organisms...the consequences of that being used by organizations like Monsanto that drive farmers out of business, forcing them to rely on purchasing their seed every year rather than collecting and reusing.

In another CFG Sadia expressed concern about, “Monsanto suing a farmer next door because the wind blew the seeds.”

A number of justice concerns related to labour issues regarding food system workers. One social justice organization for example pointed to problems such as “people not being paid a fair wage, inhumane labour practices, children being used in food production in the cocoa industry and others” (Interview 9, Syd). Alex, in describing labour injustices he saw as relevant to ethical food practices commented that, “there’s slave kids on the Ivory Coast growing cocoa or people in Thai ships being chained to like farm prawns and things like that.” Michael expressed particular concern for food processing workers, a group that are sometimes neglected by food movements (Myers & Sbicca 2015; Holt-Giménez & Shattuck 2011):

There’s [sic] people processing food...fish factories in Thailand...people have to process the food in factories or in the food ships overseas somewhere... and working conditions for people in factories doing that are horrendous, and where’s the justice in that? For our cheap, pre-packaged ready meal that we just chuck in the microwave, someone’s had to earn atrociously small amounts of money in poor factory conditions just so we can have a ready meal. I think that’s disgraceful.²³

While some participants, like Michael, purchased Fair Trade as a response to exploitation of workers, others suggested buying Australian grown and processed food as a way of ensuring higher labour standards.²⁴

Such concerns evidence an “ethics of care” (see Smith 1998) for others that are spatially distant. Social justice NGOs often rely on personal stories and images to help humanize food injustices that occur in other countries and jump across the geographic divide. For example, in advocating Fair Trade and ‘ethically sourced’ products World Vision tells the stories of

²³ Alleged enslavement of workers on Thai fishing vessels and the linkages with companies that supply products to Australian retailers has been a prevalent media story in recent months (see for example Davey 2014).

²⁴ Australian workers are not immune to exploitation however, with escalating complaints by seasonal fruit picking workers about unscrupulous contractors underpaying them and forcing them to endure extremely poor living conditions (Billings 2014; Lewis 2014).

individuals tricked onto Thai fishing boats and forced to work without pay, under threat of violence (Figure 5).

Figure 5 Images and text from World Vision ‘Don’t Trade Lives’ fact sheets



Bounmy* from Laos was tricked onto a fishing boat and forced to work for nine years without pay. “We worked 24-hour shifts and slept three to four hours per day. If we could not complete the work during work hours, the chief worker would beat us,” says Bounmy.

See World Vision (2013). *Forced and child labour is everyone’s business*. Retrieved from <<http://campaign.worldvision.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Forced-and-child-labour-is-everyones-business-fact-sheet.pdf>>.



At 17 years old, Non was forced to work on a Thai fishing boat, under the watchful eye of men with guns. He was threatened with beatings if he worked too slowly. Sometimes he was beaten for no reason. For two years, he lived aboard the boat, working from early morning and well into the night. He slept on a crowded deck with 40 other men.

See World Vision (2013). *Fishy Business: Trafficking and labour exploitation in the global seafood industry*. Retrieved from <<http://campaign.worldvision.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Trafficking-and-labour-exploitation-in-the-global-fishing-industry-fact-sheet.pdf>>.

A small number of NGOs reflected on the gendered dimension of food system injustices, including “women being exploited in manufacturing of food” (Interview 9, Syd), their particular vulnerability to food insecurity, the reliance on unpaid female labour and the difficulties faced by women in accessing and owning agricultural land in some countries (Oxfam 2014; Fair Trade ANZ 2014). Gendered injustices were not raised at all in CFGs. They represent another commonly overlooked element in considerations of food system injustice (Slocum 2007; Holt-Giménez & Shattuck 2011; Alkon 2013). Among those NGOs that did recognize such injustices, buying Fair Trade and supporting for small-scale farmers were promoted as responses.

Food waste and overconsumption, particularly overconsumption of animal products, were linked to issues of food insecurity. More than 5 billion dollars worth of food is discarded by Australians each year (Baker et al. 2009). In relation to waste an environmental NGO representative noted, “w]e actually do not have a food shortage. We can feed more than 10 Billion people right now if we can reduce this wastage” (Interview 1, Syd). Some NGOs and participants expressed a belief that if consumption of animal products was reduced the grain fed to animals could instead be fed directly to people. One food NGO explained:

[There’s] overuse of food in feeding our farmed animals...there’s a lot of other things that need to happen to be able to feed everybody equally, or equitably, but definitely freeing up all that wasted grain and soya beans fed to farmed animals would be a good start (Interview 3, Syd).

One interviewee also felt that reducing the amount of meat consumed in the West would lower its cost and increase the equity of its availability (Interview 1, Syd).

Some justice issues raised had a particular Australian flavour. A key social justice concern identified by both CFG participants and a number of NGOs was the inequities evident in the supermarket duopoly that characterises the Australian food retail landscape. The Australian supermarket sector is highly consolidated, dominated by just two chains, Woolworths and Wesfarmers-Coles (Wardle & Baranovic 2009). This duopoly accounts for over 70 percent of packaged and over 50 percent of fresh food sales (ACCC 2008; DAFF 2012). Justice concerns emerging from this duopoly have been a prominent issue in the Australian media in recent years, prompting a number of inquiries and finding a place in the political landscape (see Martin 2013).

Both lack of consumer choice and pushing out of small retailers were raised as problems, however many saw the real injustice of this concentration of power lying in the vulnerability of Australian farmers to unfair price squeezes and bullying tactics.²⁵ As one consumption organisation representative explained:

[T]he inequity of squeezing their suppliers... there’s an issue of food justice, you know. It’s farmers who are doing great work but if they’re going to get out to market where we have two players that control 80% of the grocery market in Australia,

²⁵ A new voluntary code of conduct for Australian supermarkets that sets up regulations regarding interaction with suppliers came into effect in March this year, however at the time of writing Aldi, Australia’s third largest supermarket chain, was the only retailer to sign up unequivocally.

unparalleled in the world, that concentration, then they have to toe the line with whatever conditions are put forward, and so we've seen a degree of exploitation there (Interview 4, Melb).

Chris shared his concern with:

[F]armers not getting what they deserve for the effort they're putting in, like the margins they get on their plants compared to what Woolworths gets...and they just get squeezed tighter and tighter with Woolies and Coles both trying to bring prices down and subsidizing it with sales in other areas, and the ones that lose are the farmers.

Another participant, Alex, pointed to Coles forcing farmers to financially cover in-store losses over which they had no control:

These companies leverage their buying power against the suppliers, which is a case recently, I think against Coles, because they were forcing their suppliers to absorb the cost of stupid things like thefts in store.

Some NGOs drew attention to the impact on smaller family farms in particular, with the price wars and supply chain restructuring contributing to a 'get big or get out' mentality (Knox 2014). One food organization especially worried about the long-term viability of Australian food production, saw this as a justice issue for farming communities more broadly highlighting "the effect that [the duopoly] has on a lot of farming communities...their capacity to survive" (Interview 2, Syd).²⁶

Concern about the injustices caused by the duopoly was understood to motivate a number of ethical behaviours. One CFG participant with a farming background, Jason, noted that for him, in determining how to eat, "the most overriding factor, the one that comes to mind most immediately is avoiding the two main chains, personally. That's the first thing I think of...I just don't like the monopoly occurring." Other responses included encouraging diversity by supporting small groceries and butchers or buying direct from farmers. Freya felt that even when shopping at one of the big chains she could still exercise some moral control by avoiding 'own-brand' products noting, "For ethical reasons... I do not buy Woolworths and Coles brand of stuff because they have that monopoly going on."

²⁶ In the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance's recent survey of Australian farmers' perceptions of 'unfairness' in the food system, the supermarket duopoly was identified as the number one concern (see AFSA survey report, January 2015 at <<http://www.australianfoodsovereigntyalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/FFFU-Survey-Report-Complete-22.1.15.pdf>>.)

Lewis and Huber (2015, forthcoming) note that in response to consumer concerns Woolworths and Coles have sought to 'ethicalise' themselves by engaging the ethical capital of celebrity food personalities Jamie Oliver and Curtis Stone respectively. Participant responses in CFGs suggested, however, that rather than improve perceptions of supermarkets, such alignments may instead undermine the ethical brands of these food personalities. Margaret exclaimed, "[T]he Woolworths marketing, you know, with Jamie Oliver at the moment, really pisses me off... I totally get where he's coming from because he's trying to get more people on board by making it more convenient, but I just feel like he's sold out." Isobel agreed, "I'm disappointed in Jamie Oliver, I must admit." These responses also follow revelations that farmers supplying Woolworths were being charged a substantial levy to fund the Oliver campaign (Long 2014).

5.4 Animal Justice

Animal issues also elicited particular concern in relation to ethical eating practices. Most participants and NGOs extended considerations of 'justice' to non-human animals implicated in the food system. As one interviewee put it, a more equitable food system means "justice for sentient beings. So we would include animals in our circle of compassion" (Consumer organization, interview 4, Melb). Clare stressed that, "justice in terms of what the animals experience...if their conditions are acceptable, is something that's a major concern in food production." Including non-human animals as key stakeholders in food justice operates as a form of recognitional justice. It challenges the position of the animals as an 'absent referent' (Adams 1991). It links the food product found in our supermarkets to the animal it came from and the conditions it lived under.

The prevalence of animal justice concerns is not unexpected considering the large amount of media attention directed towards the issue in Australia, particularly following the furore surrounding live animal exports (see Derosé 2012; Kembrey 2014). The success of high profile campaigns, such as Animals Australia's 'Make it Possible' campaign to end factory farming have encouraged major retailers to engage publically with animal welfare issues.²⁷

²⁷ Some IGAs, the fourth largest supermarket chain, have committed to only stocking free-range eggs and Coles has committed to sow stall free own-brand pork and cage-free own brand eggs.

The Animal Justice Party emerged in the Australian political arena in 2011.²⁸ Some organizational interviewees stressed the ‘intersectional’ nature of non-human animal and human injustices, highlighting a link between the exploitation of animals in intensive animal agricultural systems and the exploitation of workers in those systems, particularly abattoir workers. This illustrates how justice issues can overlap.

While the inclusion of animals is notable in promoting a less anthropocentric conception of justice, CFG participants and NGOs who cited animal concerns were divided into two camps; those whose understanding is underpinned by an anti-instrumentalist ‘ontological vegan’ ethic (see Plumwood 2000) and those who adopt a welfare approach. While they are allied by a belief in the need for a broader understanding of food justice that extends to non-human animals, exactly what ‘justice’ constitutes is understood differently. For example, some animal organisations argue that almost any instrumentalisation of animals is unjust. Animal Liberation Victoria states that no species should be used or killed for the profit of another (ALV 2015). Similarly one vegetarian participant drawing on the yoga precept of ‘ahimsa’, compassion, felt that it is “an unnecessary act of violence to kill animals to obtain meat” (Michelle, CFG 3).

In contrast to this vegetarian/vegan ontology, others adopted a welfare approach in which eating meat was justified where animals were treated more humanely and with respect.²⁹ Jason for example, linked his understanding of animal justice to a heightened intimacy of the kind espoused in food shows like *Gourmet Farmer*:

Having to grow your own food particularly your own meat, it gives you an innate respect for what it is because it’s not easy to raise livestock... it’s a very long process and it just gets cheapened when people just go and pick it up from the shelf...One thing I do feel quite strongly about as an eater of meat and as someone who hunts and has grown-up with animals slaughtered on their own farm is, the level of respect that I get for the animals by going through that process and being responsible for their fate...I always ask people who eat meat...whether they’d be willing to go through that

²⁸ Key principles of the Animal Justice Party in relation to food include support for diets that minimise harm to animals and the environment and opposition to intensive animal agriculture, the live transport of animals and the import of animal products derived from cruel production systems in other countries. (see Animal Justice Party Charter 2011 at < <http://animaljusticeparty.org/about/charter/>>).

²⁹ This welfare approach is consistent with Pollan’s position that, “What’s wrong with eating animals is the practice, not the principle” (2006: 328).

process, because it always seems very hypocritical to me that if you weren't willing to kill the animal, what right do you have to consume it?

Animal justice concerns therefore motivate a range of 'ethical eating' practices which may appear somewhat incongruous. Animal considerations were cited in relation to vegan/vegetarian diets, eating 'less but better' animal products, the purchase of higher welfare animal, as well as raising your own and hunting.

Although considerations like price, convenience or taste would sometimes override ethical concern for justice issues, ensuring greater animal welfare was an area that most participants felt particularly strongly about not compromising on. McKenzie, in describing what she saw as her ethical food practices said:

[I]f I'm going to buy red meat, which I rarely do, I'll feel really uncomfortable not buying organic or getting free-range instead of...even cage-free, yeah...eggs and meat are the one thing I'm very particular about buying.

Isobel shared:

[I]f it's meat I'd rather go to a very expensive, grass fed, organic butchers and buy less...I can, only eat pork if it's guaranteed free-range and even heritage breed if I can...and chickens as well, it's crucial that they're free-range.

Margaret, a young mother who noted that her budget and taste preferences would sometimes supersede attempts to eat ethically felt that "chickens and eggs is my biggest concern and is normally like the focus when I go shopping". Michael also stated that while he might go for the "cheap stuff" elsewhere, "for the meat, I need to go more ethical."

5.5 Conclusion

Ethical eating repertoires were therefore underpinned by an expansive and pluralistic array of justice issues. In addition to concern for others that are spatially or even temporally distant but ethically proximate, concern extended to non-human others. Most participants were motivated by a combination of justice concerns, that is, they were trying to eat for justice for multiple stakeholders simultaneously. Similarly, while some NGOs did focus primarily on or privilege a specific justice issue, such as animal justice, most saw the practices they advocated as a response to a number of justice issues. Ethical eating then, involves complex negotiations, an issue that is explored in the following chapter.

Chapter 6 A Lot On One's Plate: Navigating the tensions and conflicts of justice pluralism

6.1 Introduction

This plurality of justice concerns and eating options can result in competing claims on the eater's conscience. Both CFG participants and organisations identified tensions in determining how and what people ought to eat. Different justice or fairness considerations do not always align; they can compete or result in contradictions. Practices that seem to promote justice for a particular set of stakeholders when examined more closely might undermine justice for others. In addition to having to navigate the exigencies of daily life as well as gustatory and budgetary considerations that affect food practices, those wanting to eat more ethically also have to negotiate complex moral conundrums. This is what Egan-Wyer et al. (2014: 5) have referred to as the “undecidability” of ethics in consumption choices.

Alex, a particularly engaged eater suggested, “it’s almost like a balancing act in my opinion...even as conscious as you are, even then it is difficult to try and figure out the best way to lower suffering.” Leran agreed with him that it was sometimes hard to unpick the tensions and decide, as she put it, “how and where you want to point your ethics compass.” In another session, Clare, remarked that:

It’s something that’s really hard to do because it’s almost impossible to know the impact that you’re having on all of those different aspects...It’s really hard to actually eat ethically a lot of the time... there’s a lot of stuff out there telling you to go different directions.

Examination of these tensions should not dampen enthusiasm for eating more ethically or undermine its value, but adds to knowledge of the lived complexity of ethical eating repertoires. In Burke et al.’s (2014) recent quantitative study of Australian ethical purchasing decisions, the reason given most often for not purchasing ethical products was confusion about whether or not a product was in fact ‘ethical’. Deeper interrogation of these dilemmas is valuable then in understanding the freezing effect that they can have and the way consumers and organisations can better negotiate them. While tensions between different justice concerns are sometimes discussed in the literature (see for example Morgan 2010; Thavat 2011; Alkon

2013), there has been comparatively little research examining how those engaging with ethical eating repertoires are actually negotiating these. This first half of this chapter therefore examines the tensions, conflicts and difficulties encountered in trying to eat ethically. The second half goes on to explore some of the ways that consumers and organisations in Australia are responding to this complexity and how this is informing conceptions of ethical eating.

6.2 Tensions and conflicts encountered

Some of the tensions raised by participants and NGOs mirrored those that have been discussed in recent food justice work (see Chapter 2). Sadia expressed concern that:

[I]f you're getting ethical food that's like say for example, grown without pesticides, which is environmentally good, that's not necessarily grown in a way where the people doing the labour are paid well.

This draws parallels with concerns regarding the exploitation of workers on some organic farms (Alkon 2013; Allen 2008; Guthman 2004). The much-discussed tension between localism and Fair Trade was also raised:

My issue with locally grown is it also conflicts with Fair Trade. So economically, what you do is what you can specialize in. So if a country such as, I don't know, say the Ivory Coast, produces chocolate, better, cheaper, than us, should we just go for locally produced? Like there's an issue there, but then the other side of it I think, what's the greenhouse gas emission of flying over food from another country (Sadia, CFG 2).

A social justice organization that raised this concern pointed to the need for a sort of 'cosmopolitan' approach (Morgan 2010; Morgan & Sonnino 2010) that embraces both:

[T]here needs to be a balance between what we source locally and internationally, it's not a clear-cut case of just one or the other (Interview 5, Melb).

Other less familiar justice tensions also emerged. Sarah, a vegetarian student involved with the food movement described how she struggled to balance ecological and animal concerns against social justice considerations for producers adopting more responsible methods:

I have a pretty big conflict between going vegan or supporting smaller egg and dairy industries, or even between like eating meat and supporting the smaller meat

industries or being vegetarian... if I'm not going to support the small industries, then who's going to support the small industries if everyone who has an ethical viewpoint then completely switches off from those industries and then we're just left with two extremes.

In response to this tension, some organisations viewed eating 'less but better' meat and dairy as a sort of middle path.

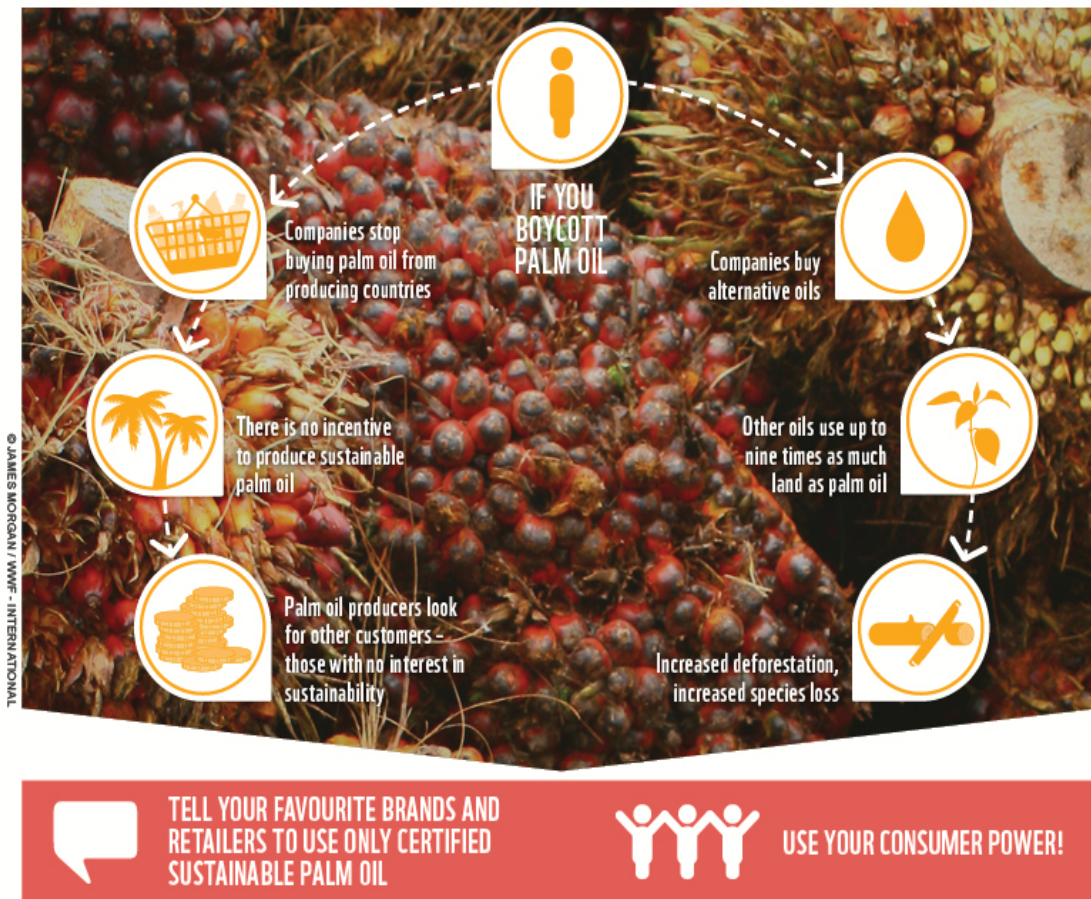
WWF highlight a tension regarding calls to boycott palm oil, stating that, "the impact [of boycotting] may be worse, on both people and the environment" (McBain 2014). As their graphic makes clear (see Figure 6), the concern is that boycotts may simply cause companies to substitute palm oil for other less efficient vegetable oils and penalise those producers that are making a genuine effort to produce palm oil more responsibly.³⁰ Tensions emerging from complex issues can therefore mean that consumers may be admonished by one NGO for engaging in a practice that another NGO encourages.

³⁰ It also appears that some companies are using less known monikers to disguise the presence of palm oil in products.

Figure 6 WWF palm oil graphic

PALM OIL - ARE BOYCOTTS THE ANSWER?

WHAT HAPPENS IF WE JUST STOP BUYING PALM OIL?



WWF. *Palm oil- What WWF is doing?* Retrieved from http://awsassets.wwf.org.au/downloads/fs_sustainable_palm_oil_infographic3_15apr14.pdf.

Tensions also emerged on a deeper level from injustices embedded within ethical food practices themselves. Some consumers felt they faced a sort of double-bind; not knowing enough about an issue made it difficult to resolve such tensions, however deeper investigation meant that further tensions sometimes presented themselves, making the task more complicated. Alex for example felt that, “The problem is actually if you go too deep in your research”. He articulated this concern in relation to Fair Trade:

Fair Trade is considered pretty good on the surface level for people who have actually bothered to get to that level, but once you go even further, deeper, there’s issues... because they’re grown in sort of developing countries in those areas, that business model, like shifts, it edges out other local producers who can’t compete with the

support that Fair Trade gets. So Fair Trade is technically good because these people have, you know, greater rights in a way, but they're also edging out other people who are now less fortunate than they are.

While Fair Trade schemes certainly provide a greater level of assurance to consumers, Alex's concerns echo Goodman et al's (2012) comment that some of the poorest and most vulnerable producers can be excluded from corporatized Fair Trade regimes.

Jason, who grew up on a farm whose operations included a commercial organic vegetable garden, pointed to the tensions he saw embedded in uncritical assumptions about both organic and local food:

[I]f you're going to grow, particularly a monoculture, whether you're doing it organically or not, you just can't sustain the crop yields without using something to suppress the predators, so pesticides of some sort are always used, and herbicides. And the problem with organic pesticides is that they're locked in to certain pesticides in order to meet the legislative requirements ...so the toxicity of those aren't being reduced over time and they're not becoming more pest specific....[local food] that's also a bit of a trap because just because it's locally grown doesn't mean it's grown more efficiently than somewhere else. You can be growing something out of season in a hothouse...If you're growing something out of season using an energy intensive process, whether it's grown locally, the cost of its production, both environmentally and price wise, would be much higher than importing it from somewhere else.

He noted that this complexity meant there were no easy fixes or decisions:

I'm discovering more and more that it's all to do with the specifics. There's not a silver bullet solution... people see organics and think great, but again everything's in the specifics and in the details. You have to get down and pull it all apart...So there's a lot of things to consider. That's what confuses me most, is the extreme complexity of what we're dealing with.

Expressing a similar sentiment one interviewee commented that, "There is a lot of good evidence to show that a lot of issues are contextual as well, so it's not so black and white, it's grey really, so that can be a bit difficult." Particular problems surrounded confusion over key terms and corporate greenwashing.

6.2.1 Different terminologies

Unraveling the complexity and negotiating competing normative considerations can be further complicated by notably different understandings of commonly used terms such as ‘sustainable’, ‘local’, ‘organic’ and ‘free-range’. The data revealed markedly different understandings across both organisations and CFGs. As one interview informant stated, “we’ve got terminology that means different things to different people” (Interview 5, Melb). Interpretations of ‘local’ food ranged from consumer ethnocentric understandings rooted in the terms ‘Australian grown/made’ to understandings encompassing specific distances (within 10 km, within 100 km), regionality, seasonality and indigeneity. Some organisations (food NGOs such as Slow Food and the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance in particular) articulated carefully the kinds of local food systems they advocated, while others simply advocated an ‘eat local’ mantra, shorn of any context. While the meaning of organic was more consistent among the NGOs, consumer definitions still varied. Even some consumers who regularly elected organic produce were uncertain about exactly what organics entailed. One participant’s definition went beyond what organic certifications in Australia currently require:

For me, that’s no use of hormones and antibiotics and stuff and also feeding them a diet which is close to what they should be eating. So for me a ...cow that’s fed grain is not an organic cow. A cow that’s fed grass is an organic cow (Isobel, CFG 1).

‘Food Sustainability’ was an especially nebulous and problematic concept. Some understood it in primarily ecological terms, others offered understandings more consistent with the Brundtland definition of sustainable development³¹ and yet others saw it as simply meaning the ability to produce food at current levels in perpetuity. One food organization representative stated that, “There’s no common meaning... it’s just a nonsense term as far as I’m concerned” also noting that it had been “hijacked” in favour of corporate interests (Interview 12, skype).

³¹ The Brundtland definition states that, “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

6.2.2 Greenwashing

In addition to this terminological confusion there was also a strong perception that greenwashing and mistruths by those wishing to cash in on people's consciences or conceal injustices made it more difficult to untangle some of these issues. Johnston and Cairns (2013) note that limited time and energy mean that, "consumers often employ a series of 'make-do' strategies – such as relying on the imagery on food packaging to determine an item's ethical status, or relying on other actors (like Whole Foods) to make ethical decisions for them" (407). Such outsourcing of ethical considerations is problematic where consumers mistrust the veracity of claims. Some ethical food discourses have become commodified by food corporates (Irvine 2013). Both participants and organisations were attuned to the fact that certain practices had become marketing buzzwords. Jason commented:

You fall victim to labeling ...and manufacturers are very aware of that. They know that cage-free or free-range is a very attractive label to whack on, but what does it mean really?

In a similar vein a social justice organization representative noted that:

The major companies have cottoned on to that idea that just slapping a logo onto something makes people, there's just a natural trust that, oh well that means this (Interview 5, Melb).

CFG participants felt that it was difficult to decide which ethical practices to engage in when they couldn't be sure that what they were buying into was genuine and they might fall victim to false claims:

Am I getting ripped off? Are they just saying organic on the package to drive the price up five bucks? (Freya, CFG 1).

[T]he whole thing makes me so skeptical when I see organic water or... organic sea-salt, and it's like, well, now I'm just completely skeptical about all the other information I've got. (Isobel, CFG 2).

Michelle, who was familiar with marketing tactics, noted:

I think working in the market research industry I'm quite aware that these claims are just made up by consumer insights people that decide, 'Oh well, we'll just go with this

claim and attribute that to a product’...I feel confused because I know that selling the product is more prominent in terms of what a company wants, rather than giving forth a truthful message.

Deliberate attempts to obfuscate consumers’ decision processes emerged then as another exploitative aspect of the food system. One consumption organization interviewee commented:

[W]hen we say this is what we imagine free-range to be and the consumer goes out there and sees on the packaging a certain image, justice is to me, getting what I’m expecting to get on that label (Interview 13, Syd).

A just food system and the ability for consumers to make informed choices therefore also requires transparency.

6.3 Responses to the complexity

Consumers and NGOs responded to this complexity in a number of ways. One response to the kind of ‘moral fatigue’ that some consumers expressed as a result of these entanglements was to periodically disengage with trying to eat ethically. There was a suggestion from some that the complexity and the sometimes apparently unresolvable tensions meant that you couldn’t be ethical all the time. As Michael, who identified himself as “a part-time ethical eater” explained:

You need to sometimes take time off from being ethical... It’s that conflict and confusion, which is best, what should I do? And, sometimes I just go with the GMO, cheap stuff, fruit and veg. I try and shut down one part of my brain.

Arianna described engaging in a sort of moral licensing type approach in which making what she saw as a more ethical choice in one area helped justify forgoing ethical considerations elsewhere:

...It’s always just one thing, assuming that some other things I’m doing so I can get this...yeah, it’s hard to be 100%.

Other consumers suggested that where resolving tensions was too difficult they might let another consideration determine certain food choices. Margaret explained, “If it’s not an easy decision, then I’ll decide on a different factor.” Sadia, in speaking of the tensions she faced in deciding between different justice concerns, stated:

It's difficult to get everything you like in one, tick all of the boxes, and then you're standing there trying to decide between these two types of eggs or whatever, and then you just go, ok they both have things I like and they both have things I don't like, I'm just going to choose the cheaper of these two.

Here consumers don't necessarily privilege considerations such as price, taste or convenience automatically, but resort to them if the decision is deemed too hard or not enough information is available.

A third approach employed was to give primacy to a particular justice concern or stakeholder group. Leran suggested that sometimes, "it boils down to which of your ethics are stronger." While prioritizing a particular stakeholder or consideration seems a common response, the danger here is that where this occurs without too much critical thought, it may lead consumers and organisations to adopt an overly narrow, blinkered approach where they fail to recognise the deeply imbricated nature of justice issues. Some participants for example suggested a relatively uncritical privileging of local food on ecological grounds, noting that tensions and trade-offs were not considered:

It's definitely not something that I really consciously think about that much. I definitely would just go for local every time (Freya, CFG 1).

Similarly, some environmental NGOs advocating local food reduced the issue to one of greenhouse gas emissions and 'food miles' without considering other factors impacting the 'justness' of particular local foods and local food systems. This is the kind of approach that some food justice scholars take issue with (DuPuis et al. 2011).

There is also concern that it may cause consumers or NGOs to simply replicate established relations of dominance. Dominant ethical eating discourses have tended to place emphasis on environmental issues, often letting these overshadow social justice concerns (Pilgeram & Meeuf 2014; Johnston & Baumann 2010; Johnston et al. 2011). The worry is that unreflexive prioritisations may reinforce uneven power relations within repertoires of ethical eating that cause the justice concerns of some groups to be neglected. Certain issues and stakeholders privileged in popular treatises and discourses will be given attention while others of equal importance may be marginalized and relegated to non-consideration.

A final approach to navigating some of the tensions evident was to adopt an understanding of conscientious eating as an imperfect process of more conscious eating. Some participants and

organisations viewed ethical eating not as mandating any specific practices, but rather as a process founded on a more “conscious” or “mindful” approach to nourishing yourself:

[K]now what you’re eating, what you’re putting in your body, where the food has come from and knowing the impact that the food will have on other people and on the environment...that’s the consciousness of what you’re eating, rather than just mindless, get that and eat it (Isobel, CFG 1).

Sarah described it as, “looking at an act that we do everyday and all the time, everyone eats, and being aware of it and thinking about all the implications.”

In articulating this ethic of ‘conscious eating’ one consumption organization interviewee noted that:

It’s a continuum. It’s going to be more ethical or less ethical, more sustainable or less sustainable, depending on what you’re looking at. We’re trying to encourage people to think in terms of better or worse... we encourage people to be discerning and be selective and know that there are going to be trade-offs (Interview 4, Melb).

Another social justice organization representative that spoke about more ‘conscious’ eating said that ‘ethical’ is “always in inverted commas”, recognizing that practices are unlikely to ever be entirely ethical (Interview 5, Melb).

Understanding ethical eating as a continuum or imperfect process allows for tensions, injustices and trade-offs to be understood as inevitable, but still recognizes value in being more attuned to these and working continually to adapt one’s eating practices. In this way it suggests a more reflexive and less dogmatic approach. While there is arguably a degree of reflexivity involved in any engagement with the ethics of eating, it is possible to be *more* reflexive. DuPuis et al. (2011) note that, “[r]eflexivity is not a set of values, but a process by which people pursue goals while acknowledging the imperfections of their actions. It is also not a particular, fixed process, but one that responds to changing circumstances, imperfectly, but with an awareness of the contradictions of the moment” (297). Eating ethically might mean eating imperfectly, but with greater awareness of those imperfections and a commitment to try and respond to them where possible. While it allows for prioritizations and compromises, reflexivity requires that these are more considered and informed, not made uncritically. In his report on the ethical food movement in Australia, Clarke (2012) argues

that, “Universal compatibility is not the point of purchasing ethical foods. ‘*Thinking about the consequences of your consumption*’ is the reason ethical foods are purchased” (xi).

6.4 Conclusion

The simple refrain to ‘eat ethically’ belies the complexity faced by consumers and NGOs. Tensions and conflicts arise between different justice considerations. This is further complicated by different interpretations of terms used and the commercialization of ethical food discourses. CFG participants and NGOs are adopting a range of methods to navigate this complexity. Acknowledging that trying to eat more ethically does not entail achieving just outcomes for everyone, all the time, helps protect against disenchantment. The interviewee that described conscious eating as a continuum stated:

[I]t’s really easy to be down on yourself and go, oh it’s free-range and it hasn’t travelled far but it’s not organic and I don’t know this, that or the other. So glass half-full is one of the things that we emphasise (Interview 4, Melb).

Ethical eating is not an all-or-nothing proposition. There is value then in NGOs being more open about the complicated and contingent nature of ethical eating and the difficulties that emerge from the plurality of competing and deeply embrangled justice concerns. In addition to negotiating these moral dilemmas, some eaters encounter practical difficulties that limit their consumptive choices. These are explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 7 Extending ethical eating: overcoming barriers and increasing diversity

7.1 Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 2 there is a further layer of justice concerns implicated in ‘eating ethically’ – those that emerge from the fact that the ability to *choose* what and how one eats might not be equally available to everyone. One of the key criticisms regarding food movements in the United States is that they have been guilty of failing to adequately reckon with the way that various inequities can impact on people’s capacity to eat more ethically; that some ethical eating repertoires can themselves be (however unintentionally) a site of exclusion. The fourth thesis question asks how NGOs in Australia are responding to these criticisms. This chapter therefore examines how organisations advocating ethical food practices in Australia are accounting for differentially privileged individuals in their rhetoric and practice. That is, how are they engaging with justice concerns regarding issues of access and exclusion. The first part of this chapter examines the barriers to participation in certain ethical food repertoires recognized by NGOs active in this space. The second half goes on to explore the ways in which organisations are responding to these barriers.

7.2 Barriers to participation

The majority of organisations sampled for this research saw lack of ‘knowledge’³² as a primary barrier to engaging in ethical eating. Shifting ingrained habits or perceptions was another commonly identified barrier to engagement. However, in addition to barriers of knowledge and habit there was also recognition by many of the NGOs of the fact that other social and structural barriers can impact on the ability to engage with particular practices being advocated- that “people are starting from very uneven ground...it’s not an even playing field” (Interview 9, Syd). Some organisations noted that structural inequities were more pronounced for certain ethnic, racial and socio-economic groups. One food organization representative stated that, “these experiences occur along axes of class and ethnicity” (Interview 8, Melb).

³² This included: knowledge about the injustices and problems of industrialised food production; knowledge about what consumers could do and which products and practices were actually more ‘ethical’; and culinary knowledge.

One interviewee did feel however that criticisms regarding a failure to engage with disparities or recognise exclusionary potential were somewhat unfounded:

I think some of it comes from trying to discredit the movement, probably that stems from the industry or from people who don't want to change what they're doing with their own lifestyle (Interview 7, Melb).

It is possible that those who have a stake in maintaining the status quo might use such claims to undermine calls for people to change their consumption patterns and care must be taken not to incorrectly paint ethical eating repertoires as bourgeois foodie fads. Essentialising ethical eating as a predilection of the privileged risks overlooking the many ways that less advantaged individuals and communities engage with ethical eating practices, including those associated with alternative food networks. Lockie (2013) argues that mischaracterising these as “universal bastions of white middle- and upper-class privilege trivializes the involvement of otherwise marginalized and/or disadvantaged participants within these networks” (416). Ignoring such engagements is equally capable of ‘morally castigating’ participants. Indeed privilege may in fact contribute to some individuals engaging in morally dubious practices. Food wastage is much greater in higher income Australian households for example (Baker et al. 2009).

Approximately a quarter of the organisations sampled identified cost or geographic access (often both) as barriers that can impede some consumers’ ability to participate in particular ethical eating practices. A few organisations noted that financial and geographic barriers to engaging with certain ethical food practices can intersect with issues of food insecurity. In terms of cost, recent Australian food basket surveys confirm that some of those foods advocated as more ‘ethical’ and ‘sustainable’ can be more costly (Barosh et al. 2014; Harrison et al. 2010). Some organisations, as well as some CFG participants, felt that a higher price often reflected the “true” cost of food and that we should all be paying more for our food.³³ Yet while many Australians now spend less of their overall income on food than has historically been the case (Cribb 2010), increasing costs of living have placed significant pressure on the food budgets of some Australians (NCOSS 2014). Disadvantaged groups, such as welfare recipients, dedicate considerably more of their income to food purchases (Palermo et al. 2008; Cancer Council NSW 2007)). The fact that higher prices might reflect

³³ This echoes the claims by Pollan that the cheapness of some foods “doesn't take account of that meal's true cost” (2006: 200) and Nestle, who claims that paying a higher price for more ethical food “is a political choice” (2006: 66).

“true cost” in terms of environmental and social externalities doesn’t negate the fact that some Australians find it much more difficult to negotiate room in their weekly food allowance.

One social justice organization felt that the corporatization of ethical food discourses has perhaps been unhelpful in relation to the cost barrier:

[T]he food industry as a whole do very well on marketing ethical products as more exclusive and more expensive and that’s how they’ve been marketed... as an industry as a whole they hold back from pushing an ethical good as an everyday product. It feeds the consumer psyche that that’s what ethical means, it means more expensive, but it also helps them boost luxury ranges and the goods that they can put a higher price tag to (Interview 5, Melb).

Another interviewee highlighted the fact that the cost barrier seems to be mired in a price paradox in which there is difficulty in finding price points that provide a fairer income for farmers and food system workers while still ensuring that financially disadvantaged consumers have access to certain foods (Campbell et al. 2013):

There is a tension, and it is present in the literature and is a big critique of local in particular and organics, between fair pricing for producers and farmers, and affordable pricing for low-income consumers. And I think that that’s a real Achilles heel of the fair and local food movement, if the focus is very much, as I think it largely has been to date, on fair prices for producers, then what that means is you’re perpetuating existing divisions in society between rich and poor in terms of consumption, because local food and organic food is sort of boutique, luxury items, that are only accessible to certain layers of society and lower income groups and people on fixed income payments are shut out of the that nice fuzzy, warm glow that you get from eating ethical food, and still consume, you know, second-rate, nutrient poor, calorie rich, junk food (Interview 8, Melb).

Markow et al. (2014) note that goals of facilitating diverse participation in market-based community food systems (CFS)³⁴ in particular can sometimes be ‘consumed’ by competing goals to provide fair prices to producers.

In terms of barriers to access encountered along spatial lines organisations pointed to

³⁴ Market-based community food systems include farmers’ markets, farm-gate initiatives and some CSA schemes.

the fact that, “people that are isolated, really far away from cities, they might not have a choice of what they buy and what they eat.” (Interview 10, Syd). Rural and regional areas were identified as being at a disadvantage in getting access to a variety of foods, particularly fresh produce:

[I]n a lot of areas where our food is grown, the food gets shipped in to the city folk and the people that are actually near the food growing areas don’t actually have access to it. So I definitely think that geography is a huge barrier and I think just driving through any of the country towns in Australia, you know, often they’ve got the big supermarket and not many other options (Food NGO, interview 6, Melb).

Another interviewee commented:

[W]e’re quite privileged to have access to food-coops here, but in regional or remote areas they might just rely on one Woolies or Coles (Consumption NGO, interview 13, Syd).

This is consistent with findings that people living in remote areas have a reduced variety of fresh foods available to them (Cancer Council NSW 2007). There is also a paradoxical fact that those Australians in agricultural areas are particularly prone to food insecurity (Keating 2012; Harrison et al. 2007).

However, barriers to access in Australia are not just an issue for those living in rural or remote areas. In CFGs participants talked about issues of access to more ethical options for those living in the Greater Metropolitan area of Sydney. Scott for example stated, “It’s a spatial thing as well, so if you’re moving towards the Western Sydney way you can’t access it. You have to go to the Eastern suburbs or the Northern Beaches or North Shore to get ethical food sometimes.” One consumption organization interviewee highlighted urban access issues in similar terms to Scott:

[W]e’re extremely lucky that in the Eastern suburbs where we live it’s all very accessible...we understand that’s not the case everywhere in Australia, as soon as you get a little bit out of the East and the North [of Sydney], accessibility is reduced (Interview 13, Syd).

Sadia, who lived in the suburban hinterland in Sydney’s West, noted that her suburb lacked local, independent retailers, limiting choice somewhat:

There isn’t that local, like local butcher or greengrocer whatever, so I think when it comes to produce and stuff it’s just whatever is there.

Western Sydney is associated with relatively high levels of socio-economic disadvantage (Baum et al. 2010).

Ball et al's (2009) study of local food environments in Melbourne found that socio-economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods had fewer grocery store options, with residents generally having to travel further to access them. Residents in more advantaged areas also had a greater range of produce available to them. Some individuals therefore face compound-barriers; those with reduced incomes may also reside in lower socio-economic areas that lack food infrastructure (Keating 2012). In these areas lack of a private vehicle can also further compound access issues (Burns & Inglis 2006). Only two organizations raised this link between access and automobility. Dixon and Isaacs (2013) note that both income level and urban planning policies are upstream drivers of food provisioning choices in Australia. While there was a perception that cost barriers coincided with socio-economic disadvantage, fewer organisations linked socio-economic disadvantage to physical access difficulties in urban areas.

One organization also identified a “cultural barrier” for some consumers, particularly recent immigrants, in which familiar and culturally appropriate foods were not readily available:

If they've migrated to Australia and are used to eating certain foods and then don't have access to them, then they might fall into sort of really, traditional unhealthy western ways of eating (Food NGO, Interview 6, Melb).

Harris et al. (2014) comment that while ‘food deserts’ generally refer to access to ‘food’ in general, inability to access ‘culturally appropriate’ food is equally problematic for marginalized communities, particularly refugee populations. While inadequate culinary knowledge was recognized as a barrier more generally, some organisations reflected on the fact that this could sometimes manifest in more pronounced ways along lines of socio-economic status.

Unsurprisingly, organisations that identified barriers or inequities tended to be organisations where food and eating were a central aspect of their work. Those organisations that engaged with ethical food practices more incidentally or as only a small component of their work rarely identified these issues. Two questions that arise then are how are those organisations that recognize barriers seeking to engage with these difficulties? And how are they

responding to food justice criticisms and working to make their messages relatable to and actionable by a diverse array of consumers? These questions are addressed in the ensuing section.

7.3 Responses to barriers

For some of the 46 organisations sampled, advocating a diverse array of more ethical food practices was one means of recognising and accounting for a range of capacities, approaches and cultural frames. As one interviewee asserted, “there are lots of different entry points into the journey of living more lightly and living ethically” (Interview 4, Melb). On another level however, some organisations recommended different methods that could be used by individuals to overcome some of the barriers identified. Buying seasonal produce and reducing the proportions of meat and dairy consumed or avoiding them altogether were commonly recommended as a way to keep costs down. One food organization for example, suggested these as a way people could negotiate the higher price tag of organic food:

[I]f you’re going to a traditional organic retailer they can often be quite a bit more expensive, but if you’re buying what’s in season, that’s the cheapest way that you can really eat. And where eating organically increases in price dramatically is where you’re eating specialty items like meat, cheese and dairy. Of course people want to eat that, but if you eat it in the proportions that we’re suggesting, it doesn’t actually end up being ridiculously more expensive (Interview 6, Melb).

Reducing or refraining from the consumption of meat and dairy was simultaneously linked to benefits for the environment, for animals and for health so that there was never an ‘if you can’t afford better, go without it’ tone. Similarly the possibility of working shares³⁵ in CSA food box schemes was generally linked to the benefits of an embodied connection to where your food is coming from.

Another organization suggested buying from producers who grew organically but had not opted for certification, as their products could often be bought cheaper at farmers’ markets. Buying in bulk was also recommended by a number of NGOs:

[Buy] one or two good cuts a week, or [go] into a cow share, which some of the butchers do, where you can buy in bulk (Interview 13, Syd).

³⁵ A working share is where an individual offers labour in lieu of payment or in exchange for a reduced fee, sometimes referred to as ‘sweat equity’.

Other practices advocated included freezing cheaper seasonal food or food on special for later use, making organic snack foods yourself rather than buying the more expensive ready-made versions or growing your own. Lockie et al. (2002; 2006; 2013) note that Australian consumers committed to purchasing organic but unable to afford premium prices may negotiate costs by buying in bulk, avoiding processed and ‘luxury’ foods and shopping at places like co-operatives where the prices may be reduced. Practices being recommended by NGOs appear to be consistent with these findings.

Negotiating means to overcome geographic barriers to access is more complicated. Buying some goods online or growing your own were recommended as ways that consumers might access certain goods not readily available in their locales. Joining a community garden was promoted as a way that those without access to suitable growing space could share in the benefits of home-grown produce. A number of community gardens in Australia are run by or engage groups who might find it more difficult to otherwise access fresh produce and growing space including those living in housing commissions, the aged and migrants.³⁶ Community gardens were also seen as a way of enabling different cultural and ethnic groups access to culturally appropriate foods.

Some organisations that recognize the barriers faced by certain consumers in relation to particular practices simultaneously advocate for reforms to address them. One food organization for example suggested that, “one of our campaigns is to make available, perhaps through government subsidies, fresh fruit and vegetables, which should be available to everyone in Australia” (Interview 3, Syd). Others go even further, suggesting the need for more substantial reform and social equity programming. They see advocating for policy and legislative change to address underlying inequalities as a necessary corollary to people eating more ethically. The Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance’s *People’s Food Plan* for example calls for a number of policy reforms that seek to address inequities in access. Such organisations often encourage the individuals ‘consuming’ their messaging to also participate in advocacy and policy reform work. A number of NGOs urge people to write letters to local politicians, start petitions or lobby State or Federal ministers. Others organize rallies and workshops, invite contributions to submission papers or encourage people to vote for particular political parties.

³⁶ Cultivating Community and the RAW Garden in Melbourne, the Logan Community Food Garden on the outskirts of Brisbane and the Refugee Garden Project in Sydney are examples of such initiatives.

It is this capacity for engagement with ethical eating practices to act as a possible gateway to further collective social action that criticisms painting ethical consumption as a “panacea for middle-class guilt...an individualistic form of politics” (see Littler 2011: 27) often overlook or underestimate. Seeing eating as an ethico-political act can potentially make for more politicized citizens, not just in terms of the individual politics of everyday life, but in terms of politics more broadly. The potential for exposure to ethical eating messages to galvanize political action and reinforce social solidarity problematizes the view that engagement with individual, responsabilized consumer practices necessarily subordinates more collectivist and progressive actions. It challenges the reductive neo-liberal/radical binary. There is the need however for further research to examine the extent to which Australian consumers are taking up these activities as a result of NGO messaging.

Further research is also required to gain a clearer picture of how NGO responses to barriers marry with what individuals and communities themselves perceive as barriers to engagement. Only a small number of relatively privileged consumers were included in this study and some practices such as community gardening or CSA schemes were underrepresented. While Markow et al’s (2014) recent work examines some of the barriers to engaging with CSAs, community gardens, farmers’ markets and food swaps that low-socioeconomic status individuals in South Australia identify, there is a need to expand these investigations to include a wider array of practices and marginalized groups.

7.4 Conclusion

While there are some organizations that don’t recognize or account for any inequities, others are making a concerted effort to try and avoid myopic calls to ‘eat ethically’ without recognizing the contextual features that determine how people may eat. In recognizing the barriers that some individuals and communities face, these organisations are responding by including content about how to negotiate such difficulties in their messages. Buying seasonally or in bulk, reducing proportions of animal products consumed, freezing seasonal produce for later use, buying online, making or growing your own and joining a community garden are some of the methods suggested for overcoming access barriers. A few NGOs are going even further and campaigning for wider structural and policy reform to help address

them. In this latter capacity NGOs encourage those exposed to their message to likewise agitate for structural change. These efforts to confront asymmetries of access are important in invigorating Australian food movements and pushing them towards a more inclusive and transformative vision.

Chapter 8 Food for thought

8.1 Introduction

Food is central to a number of challenges facing humanity and there is very real need to shift production, distribution and consumption practices to help ameliorate these. Engagements with ‘ethical eating’ are therefore much more than just a postmodern vogue among gastronomes. As Goodman et al. (2010) write, “morality is a key and growing currency in the provisioning of food in much of the post-industrial North and beyond” (1783). This thesis represents one of the first Australian studies to use a food justice lens to examine ethical food movements. In doing so it adds to the empirical literature on how consumers and ethical eating advocates are navigating the complexities of more ethical consumption. It also helps situate issues of food justice within broader environmental and climate movements that are gaining momentum in a number of countries. This final chapter draws together the findings and insights of the previous four chapters, considers possible implications for the future of ethical food movements in Australia, and outlines pathways for further research.

8.2 Answering the thesis questions

The first thesis question asks *what ethical eating repertoires NGOs and consumers are engaging?* Ethical eating repertoires were found to encompass a multitude of behaviours that include a diversity of market, non-market and self-provisioning practices, dietary choices, as well as practices and narratives relating to the use and treatment of food. Some participants and organisations saw ethical eating as necessitating elements of voluntary simplicity; the need to consume less rather than simply buying better. Within these repertoires, certain key themes contour conceptions of a just food system. In CFGs and among NGOs, food justice concerns were often articulated through a grammar of fairness. A number of NGOs and environmentalists also saw food justice as necessitating a relational understanding of ethical eating that (re)connects eaters with the people, places and non-human others impacted by their consumptive practices. Both ‘fairness’ and ‘(re)connection’ therefore emerge as important elements of the language of food justice employed in ethical eating repertoires in the Australian context.

There is the need for a more thorough investigation about what this coalescence around fairness and (re)connection within ethical eating repertoires reveals about ethical food movements in Australia, and how it may differ from elsewhere. Where do the differences and commonalities lie in terms of what a ‘fair’ or ‘connected’ food system looks like for groups that emphasize different justice concerns? Starr (2010) writes that, “social movements are long, stuttering conversations in which conversants do not begin with the same mother tongue but over time develop both linguistic and cultural literacy” (8). What potential then does this shared language offer for building alliances and cohesiveness across different ethical food discourses and between different stakeholders?

The second thesis question asks *what justice concerns are motivating and informing ethical eating practices identified by NGOs and self-identified environmentalists?* Applying a justice lens to this varied constellation of practices reveals the plethora of issues considered ethically salient by the two groups examined here. These extend across ecological, social and animal justice themes. Perhaps unsurprisingly, ecological justice concerns underscored the greatest number of ethical eating practices identified by both groups. Issues of climate justice in particular emerged as a key (and expanding) component of such concerns. The emphasis on exploitation of food system workers as a social justice issue is notable, as this is an area that is sometimes overlooked in dominant repertoires of ethical eating. Gendered injustices however, were acknowledged by only a small number of NGOs. While animal justice concerns underpinned fewer ethical eating behaviours than environmental or social justice concerns, CFG participants also suggested they were least likely to compromise in relation to these practices.³⁷

Examining the justice issues underlying specific behaviours reveals how concern for a particular stakeholder can motivate markedly different (and sometimes seemingly incongruous) practices. Animal justice concerns for example motivated both hunting and veganism. The issues and subjects of ethical concern revealed by participants and NGOs evidence an expansive conception of justice (or indeed fairness) that embraces multi-scalar,

³⁷ While consumers may be less likely to compromise on practices motivated by animal justice, there has been particular concern expressed about the misleading of consumers in relation to animal welfare claims in Australian supermarkets. Parker et al. (2013) argue, for example, that many of the ‘free-range’ eggs available do not address animal welfare concerns and simply seek to drive down consumer expectations of what free-range should actually mean.

intergenerational, communitarian and inter-species understandings. Particular justice concerns, such as those regarding the impacts of the supermarket duopoly, are reflective of the Australian context. This emphasises the need for situated and contextualised understandings of justice issues and how these inform ethical eating practices in different places and among different groups.

In response to the third thesis question, *examining the justice tensions, conflicts and difficulties that emerge from decisions regarding what and how to eat*, makes clear that eating ethically is a complex practice. Even where individuals or groups have a real hunger to do the ‘right thing’, it might not always be entirely clear what that is. Justice tensions emerge on multiple levels both between different practices and within particular practices. The first challenge lies in the fact that understandings of what is ‘just’ vary. Consumers are also trying to simultaneously consider multiple justice concerns that aren’t always easy to untangle. This ‘justice pluralism’ results in sometimes-competing justice concerns that can be difficult to reconcile. The accumulation of knowledge may certainly help resolve or avoid some of the tensions faced and NGOs are very important in this regard. Other tensions however are not so easily dealt with, such as those where justice concerns appear equally important and incommensurable. Some consumers noted that learning more about a particular practice or issue may also introduce new dilemmas because of the multiple layers of justice considerations.

The proclivity of some consumers and NGOs to view certain practices as ethical eating par excellence without considering the contextual features of particular projects can mask the tensions embedded in this pluralism. It is entirely understandable that organisations want to avoid scaring consumers off, however underplaying the complexity encountered may equally result in individuals giving up when they discover the matter isn’t always as simple and one-dimensional as they may have been led to believe. This is not to downplay the value of or dampen the zeal with which organisations promote and individuals engage in more ethical eating, instead it calls for NGOs to be more explicit about the tensions and trade-offs that they and those trying to eat more ethically have to navigate.

Greater awareness of the tensions and trade-offs concerned also allows NGOs to examine how the practices they advocate might align with or conflict with those being promoted by

other organisations and actors. While terminological confusion and corporate co-optation of discourses can further add to the complexity, here NGOs can play an important role in resolving some of the difficulty. Firstly, by being clearer about how they themselves understand commonly used terms. Secondly, some NGOs also perform a valuable ‘watchdog’ role in relation to corporate use of ethical food rhetoric and marketing ploys, assessing the veracity of claims made.

Examining how CFG participants and NGOs are actually negotiating this complexity goes towards addressing a key gap in the literature. Responses to the tensions encountered included taking a break from ethical eating, using a kind of licensing approach, turning to non-ethical considerations such as price as the determining factor or adopting a heuristic approach that privileged a particular justice concern or stakeholder group. A few organisations and participants sought to negotiate this complexity by espousing a less doctrinaire approach to ethical eating in favour of a more processual understanding that acknowledges motivational conflicts and occasional incommensurability. They argued that there is not an exact recipe for eating ethically and adopted a sort of Thoreauvian ethic where the intention is instead to eat ‘deliberately’.

The final thesis question asks *how ethical eating proponents in Australia are responding to the concerns raised in food justice critiques of ethical food movements?* The thesis explores how Australian organisations are engaging with the cultural and practical politics of promoting particular conceptions of ‘ethical eating’ where the capacities or cultural frames of individuals and communities vary. Although the majority of organisations surveyed remain unengaged with questions of inequality or privilege within ethical food movements (some are perhaps even dismissive), about a quarter are taking seriously such concerns, seeking to incorporate a justice lens into their own work. These organisations are making a concerted effort to move away from the culinary moralism that the academic food justice literature critiques in which ethical eating practices are divorced from the social, political and economic milieu in which different eaters live. They were sensitive to barriers that emerge as a result of an individual’s financial, geographic, cultural, ethnic or class positionality. In some cases intersectionality between these subjectivities was understood to result in compound barriers, such as where financially disadvantaged individuals also reside in areas that lack food infrastructure. Among those organisations that saw ethical eating as more than just a function

of ‘choice’ many responded by suggesting means to overcome some of the barriers that might be encountered.

Some organisations go further, linking recognition of such barriers to the need for more radical structural reform that aims to shift underlying inequities. This challenges the perception of ethical consumption as simply diluting or crowding out collectivist political engagement by devolving responsibility to individuals and their consumption practices and contributing to a neo-liberal imagination (see eg. Alkon & Mares 2012; Guthman 2007). There is a sense among many of the NGOs and CFG participants that state intervention and structural reform are necessary and that political engagement is required to help bring this about.³⁸ While eating ethically might itself be elevated to the level of political action, some NGOs simultaneously encourage people to engage in more traditional political pursuits. This then has the potential to locate individual repertoires of ethical eating within larger motives for reform and link them with counter-hegemonic social movement politics.

8.3 A more reflexive approach to ethical eating

The perils of reductive assumptions about both the practices and subjects of ethical eating mean that ethical eating repertoires in Australia need to move beyond unreflexive mantras and universalisms. It’s not enough for example to simply ask everyone to “pay the true cost” of food. A more reflexive, nuanced and egalitarian conception of ethical eating requires recognition of tensions, trade-offs and barriers to engagement faced by consumers. As DuPuis et al. (2011) comment, “[r]eflexivity begins by admitting the contradictions and complexity of everyday life” (297). Some organisations are clearly seeking to do this, however this does pose a challenge. How do organisations make their messages actionable, appealing to time poor and less engaged consumers while still recognizing the complicated nature of the moral challenge of determining how and what we ought to eat? Organizations operate within a particular discursive framework that sometimes requires them to frame messages as sound bites or simple pronouncements, particularly where news media are concerned. Media

³⁸ Lavin (2009) points to the ultra-libertarian, individualist element of some of the food movement rhetoric in the US (best personified by Joel Salatin), which is highly skeptical of state intervention and sees personal choice as *the* means to address the unsavory aspects of the food system. This view was absent from the Australian NGOs and consumers included here.

attention is important where eaters are less engaged or not aligned with particular causes and so are less likely to seek out NGO content themselves.

Encouraging an understanding of ethical eating as ‘journey’ or imperfect process, as some NGOs are doing, perhaps offers an implicit acknowledgement that tensions are inevitable, that there may be no hard and fast rules and that different people may take different paths- it connotes a critical consciousness. Many organisations with high visibility also engage with ethical eating only nominally, sometimes making them more inclined to resort to mantras. Here, strengthening alliances between different NGOs (particularly across different focus areas), allowing them to draw on each other’s resources or direct interested persons towards each other for more information, offers one means of responding to differing levels of organizational involvement.

8.4 Future directions

While this thesis begins to paint a picture of the ethical foodscape in Australia, there is a need to expand this research to include other equally important actors not adequately captured here. Only a very small sub-set of consumer views, from relatively engaged and privileged eaters, were canvassed in the CFGs conducted. As less privileged eaters may seek to eat ethically in different ways and confront different challenges, a deeper interrogation of the justice issues concerned requires investigation of the experiences of a larger and more diverse cross-section of the population.

The views of a much wider range of eaters, including rural and Indigenous perspectives, need to be explored. The embodied knowledges and relational notions of country that inform some Indigenous philosophies and histories of eating (Bawaka country et al. 2013) have a great deal to offer ethical food movements in Australia. More-than-human relationalities in particular, have the potential to push understandings of ethical eating and future research in important, novel and interesting directions.

As noted above, there is a further need to examine what consumers themselves view as obstacles or exclusions and pathways for inclusion, and this is particularly important for groups where inequities may be more pronounced. Both rural and Indigenous communities

are especially vulnerable to food insecurity and reduced choice (Keating 2012). While some NGOs are working to make ethical eating narratives more inclusive, the voices of certain stakeholders are still notably absent from popular accounts of ethical eating. Mares and Peña (2011) argue that engaging those individuals and communities that have been excluded from mainstream food movements is vital in achieving greater justice.

While focus group participants cited a number of NGO campaigns (see Appendix G), NGOs are only one of many sources of direction regarding ethical eating and consumers may draw on these in less than straightforward ways. Further research on how Australian consumers are negotiating between different (often competing and sometimes contradictory) sources of guidance and information is warranted. The messaging and enactments of smaller community organisations, local governments, private sector actors such as industry groups and food personalities, chefs and ‘ethical restaurateurs’ who are shaping the ethical foodscape in Australia, both discursively and materially, also require exploration. They too offer different understandings and practices not captured in this thesis. For example, Kylie Kwong advocates entomophagy, eating insects, as a more ethical protein source, serving Cantonese-style fried rice with mealworms and chili cricket sauce in her restaurant, Billy Kwong. Including food professionals is also important in light of the way both NGOs and food corporations are aligning themselves with such individuals (Kwong is associated with Oxfam.)

Eating is one of the key ways that we embody social, cultural and spatial geographies. This research takes an important step towards a contextualized understanding of repertoires of ethical eating in Australia. There is however, still the need for more detailed examination of the differences in repertoires of ethical eating and obstacles to engaging them that manifest at different spatial scales, including at regional and community levels.

While poet laureate Pablo Neruda suggested that eating is itself a profound act of justice, justice is multiply implicated in ethical food rhetoric and practice. Drawing on Johnston et al’s (2011) repertoire approach, this thesis offers a new conceptual frame of *ethical eating as justice* that may be taken up and applied in future research in relation to other contexts and actors. It recognizes the goal of achieving justice both through and within ethical eating repertoires; ethical food movements seek to respond to injustices, but also need to keep an eye on the substantive ‘justness’ of their own actions and pronouncements. Approaching ethical

eating as justice offers a means of engaging more deeply with the messy complexities, exclusionary potential and slippery ambiguities of trying to ‘eat well’ while revealing the manifold possibilities of food movements in Australia.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A- Interview details

Interview Number	NGO Focus	Interview location
1	Environmental	Sydney
2	Food	Sydney
3	Food	Sydney
4	Consumption	Melbourne
5	Social Justice	Melbourne
6	Environmental	Melbourne
7	Animal	Melbourne
8	Food	Melbourne
9	Social Justice	Sydney
10	Environmental	Sydney
11	Food	Sydney
12	Food	Skype
13	Consumption	Sydney

Appendix B- Sample interview questions

- 1) Can you explain a little about the role of your organisation and how food plays a part in this.
- 2) What does 'eating ethically' mean to the organisation?
- 3) What actions does your organization advocate as a way of making food practices more ethical?
- 4) What does 'food sustainability' mean to the organization?
- 5) How do you think the actions your organization advocates might impact on issues of food sustainability?
- 6) People sometimes talk about 'food justice'. What does food justice mean to you?
- 7) What issues do you think are most important in achieving food justice in Australia?
- 8) What barriers/ opportunities do you see regarding ethical eating? How can we overcome these? What is the contribution of your organization?
- 9) How do you think the actions your organization advocates might impact on social justice or equity issues in relation to food?
- 10) Do you see any potential tensions/conflicts between different ethical eating issues, for example between issues of ecological sustainability and social justice?
- 11) What are your hopes and visions for the food system in the future?

Appendix C – Interview information and consent form



Department of Environment & Geography
Faculty of Science
MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY NSW 2109

Phone: +61 (0)2 9850 7993
Email: andrew.mcgregor@mq.edu.au

Supervisor's Name:
A/ Prof Andrew McGregor

Participant Information and Consent Form

Name of Project: **Bringing justice to the table- Investigating how issues of food justice are implicated in ethical food practices in Australia**

You are invited to take part in a research study investigating issues of food justice and ethical food in Australia. The purpose of the study is to examine how food justice is conceived of and engaged with in relation to ethical food practices being promoted in Australia.

The study is being conducted by Tasmin Dilworth to meet the requirements of a Master of Research under the supervision of Associate Professor Andrew McGregor of the Department of Environment & Geography.

Phone: +61 (0)2 9850 7993

Email: andrew.mcgregor@mq.edu.au

What does the study involve?

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to take part in a 30-45 minute interview with the researcher. The interview will preferably be conducted face-to-face and will be held at a location and at a time that is acceptable to you. Where a face-to-face interview is not possible, the interview may be conducted over the phone.

The interview will be concerned with how your organisation engages with issues of food justice and will include questions about the work that you do relating to ethical food behaviours.

The interview will be digitally audio recorded to allow the researcher to transcribe the data so that it can be analysed using software. Recording the interview helps ensure that your responses are accurately captured. You may also be asked to complete an optional follow up questionnaire (2 pages) asking you to answer some additional questions and to clarify or further address interesting issues raised during the interview.

Aside from giving up your time, we do not expect that there will be any risks or costs associated with taking part in this study. We cannot guarantee or promise that you will receive any direct benefits from being in the study.

How will the data be used?

Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the study are confidential, except as required by law. Study findings may be published, but you will not be individually identifiable in these publications. Only Tasmin Dilworth and Andrew McGregor will have access to the data.

Recordings will be transcribed and used for interpretation and analysis. No third parties will be involved in this transcription or analysis. Non-identifiable data generated through the project may be retained to inform future research projects exploring issues of food and sustainability.

A summary of the results of the data can be made available to you on request. You can request a summary by emailing Tasmin at tasmin.dilworth@students.mq.edu.au. The summary will be made available after the study is completed. You may also request to be notified of any resultant publications.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to participate and if you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence.

I, _____ have read and understand the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without consequence.

I understand that the results of this study may be published, but these publications will not contain my name or any identifiable information about me.

I understand that non-identifiable data generated in this project may be retained to inform future research projects exploring issues of food and sustainability and I consent to this using the “Yes” checkbox below.

☐ Yes, I consent to non-identifiable information being retained for use in future projects.

☐ No, I don't consent to this information being retained.

I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Participant's Name: _____
(Block letters)

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Investigator's Name: _____
(Block letters)

Investigator's Signature: _____ Date: _____

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Committee through the Director, Research Ethics (telephone (02) 9850 7854; email ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix D- Advertisement for focus group participants



Invitation to Participate in Research Study on Ethical Eating and Food Justice

Bringing Justice to the Table- Investigating how issues of food justice are implicated in ethical food practices in Australia

Are you an environmentalist?

Do you care about the environment and its protection?

Are you an Australian resident aged 18 or over?

If you answered yes to the above questions then you are invited to participate in a study investigating food justice and ethical eating in Australia.

The purpose of the research is to examine the relationship between issues of food justice and ethical food practices being promoted in Australia. We are interested in your views, ideas and food consumption habits.

The research is being conducted by Tasmin Dilworth to meet the requirements of a Master of Research under the supervision of Associate Professor Andrew McGregor of the Department of Environment & Geography (andrew.mcgregor@mq.edu.au).

What does the study involve?

You would be asked participate in a one and half hour focus group and complete of a short, two page questionnaire asking some further questions and collecting demographic data. The focus group would discuss how you perceive the relationship between issues of food justice and ethical food behaviours and will be held at a suitable location (most likely Macquarie University) on a weekday evening or weekend during October to December 2014.

The session would be digitally audio recorded so the research can be transcribed for analysis using software.

Each participant will receive a payment of \$15 to cover travel costs. Refreshments will be provided.

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee.

How can I find out more?

If you think you might be interested in participating or would just like to find out more, please contact Tasmin Dilworth at tasmin.dilworth@students.mq.edu.au.

Appendix E –Sample focus group questions

- 1) What issues most affect where and how you shop for food?
- 2) What comes to mind when I mention ethical eating? What sort of practices do you associate with ethical eating?
- 3) Do you consider yourself an ethical eater? Why? How important are ethical concerns to your food choices?
- 4) Do you ever feel confused about what choice is the most ethical?
- 5) What do you see as barriers to engaging in ethical food practices?
- 6) What does the term 'food sustainability' mean to you?
- 7) People sometimes talk about 'food justice'. What does 'food justice' mean to you?
- 8) What do you see as the most important negative environmental and social impacts of our food production and consumption practices? What does a just food system look like to you?
- 9) Do you see any trade offs between different ethical eating practices or issues?
- 10) Ethical food is often associated with the alternative food system. Do you think aspects of the alternative food system- emphasizing local, organic food, farmer's markets etc.- are more ethical?
- 11) What do you think is meant by:
'local', 'organic', 'free-range' 'Fair Trade', 'food security', 'GMOs', 'food sovereignty'?
- 12) What sources of information do you use to evaluate the sustainability or ethicality of particular foods or food behaviours?
- 13) Do you think there is sufficient information available to allow consumers to make informed choices?

Appendix F- Focus group information and consent form



Department of Environment & Geography
Faculty of Science
MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY NSW 2109
Phone: +61 (0)2 9850 7993
Email: andrew.mcgregor@mq.edu.au

Supervisor's Name: Andrew McGregor

Participant Information and Consent Form

Name of Project: **Bringing Justice to the Table- Investigating how issues of food justice are implicated in ethical food practices in Australia**

You are invited to take part in a research study investigating issues of food justice and ethical food in Australia. The purpose of the study is to examine how food justice is conceived of and engaged with in relation to ethical food practices being promoted in Australia.

You have been invited to participate in this study because it is believed that you are a self-identified environmentalist over the age of 18 and thus may meet the criteria for participation. If this is the case, we would be very grateful of your involvement with this work.

The study is being conducted by Tasmin Dilworth to meet the requirements of a Master of Research under the supervision of Associate Professor Andrew McGregor of the Department of Environment & Geography.

Phone: +61 (0)2 9850 7993

Email: andrew.mcgregor@mq.edu.au

What does the study involve?

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to take part in a one and a half hour focus group session and complete a short, two-page questionnaire.

The focus group will discuss how you perceive the relationship between issues of food justice and ethical food behaviours and will be held at Macquarie University on a weekday evening or on the weekend during October to December 2014. The session will be digitally audio recorded so that the data can be transcribed and analysed using software. Recording the session helps ensure that your responses are accurately captured.

At the end of the focus group you will also be asked to fill out a two-page questionnaire asking you to answer some additional questions and provide demographic information (your age bracket, occupation, household income bracket and education level). Demographic information will be kept strictly confidential. It is requested to allow the researcher to interpret data and to ascertain focus group make-up. The questionnaire will take no more than 15 minutes to complete. Your total time commitment will therefore be one hour and forty-five minutes. Participants will receive \$15 to cover travel costs. Refreshments will be provided.

Aside from giving up your time, we do not expect that there will be any risks or costs associated with taking part in this study. We cannot guarantee or promise that you will receive any direct benefits from being in the study.

How will the data be used?

Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the study are confidential, except as required by law. Study findings may be published, but you will not be individually identifiable in these publications. Only Tasmin Dilworth and Andrew McGregor will have access to the data.

Recordings will be transcribed and used for interpretation and analysis. No third parties will be involved in this transcription or analysis. Non-identifiable data generated through the project may be retained to inform future research projects exploring issues of food and sustainability.

A summary of the results of the data can be made available to you on request. You can request a summary by emailing Tasmin at tasmin.dilworth@students.mq.edu.au. The summary will be made available after the study is completed. You may also request to be notified of any resultant publications.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to participate and if you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence.

If you take part in a focus group, you are free to stop participating at any stage or to refuse to answer any of the questions. However, it will not be possible to withdraw your individual comments from our records once the group has started, as it is a group discussion.

I, _____ have read and understand the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without consequence.

I understand that non-identifiable data generated in this project may be retained to inform future research projects exploring issues of food and sustainability and I consent to this using the “Yes” checkbox below.

☐ Yes, I consent to non-identifiable information being retained for use in future projects.

☐ No, I don't consent to this information being retained.

I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Participant's Name: _____
(Block letters)

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Investigator's Name: _____
(Block letters)

Investigator's Signature: _____ Date: _____

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Committee through the Director, Research Ethics (telephone (02) 9850 7854; email ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix G- Food campaigns cited by focus group participants

Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Focus Group 3	Focus Group 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fair Trade International and Oxfam Fair Trade - Matt Evans' Sustainable Seafood 'Label my fish' campaign - Animals Australia- Make it Possible Campaign - 'Eat Local' (general) - Harris Farms' 'Imperfect Picks' campaign - Australian Certified Organic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fair Trade International - Utz Certified (coffee, cocoa and tea) - Food Orbit (linking chefs and producers) - Australian Certified Organic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Matt Evans' Sustainable Seafood 'Label my fish' campaign - Do Something (Foodwise) 'Meat Free Monday' campaign - Animal Liberation Victoria's Vegan Easy Challenge - Slow Food campaign - 'Eat Local' (general) - NSW Office of Environment and Heritage 'Love Food Hate Waste' campaign - Jamie Oliver healthy school lunches campaign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fair Trade International - Youth Food Movement's 'Meet the Maker' campaign - Harris Farms' 'Imperfect Picks' campaign - Animals Australia- Poultry welfare campaign - OzHarvest food donation campaign - 'Naked Food' school lunch campaign - Heat Foundation Tick - Australian Certified Organic - Real food- Anti-GMO campaign

Appendix H- Justice motivations for ethical food behaviours identified

Ethical food behaviour	Ecological justice motivation	Social justice motivation	Animal justice motivation
Where/from whom food is sourced			
Eating Local (differing definitions)	✓	✓	
Shopping at farmers' markets		✓	
Grow/raise your own	✓		✓
Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)		✓	
Shop at co-ops		✓	
Buy direct/Farm gate		✓	
Food swaps	✓	✓	
Support small-scale/family farms		✓	
Hunting/foraging			✓
Buying from local butcher/greengrocer		✓	
Avoiding major supermarket chains		✓	
Gleaning /dumpster diving	✓	✓	
What food is bought/grown/eaten			
Eating seasonally	✓		
Eating organic/ biodynamic	✓	✓	✓
Higher welfare			✓
Eating fewer animal products	✓	✓	✓
Sustainable seafood	✓		✓
Fair Trade		✓	
Less processed/junk food	✓		
Veganism	✓	✓	✓
Vegetarianism	✓	✓	✓
Avoid GMOs			
Avoid bottled water	✓		
Sustainable palm oil products	✓	✓	✓
Avoid palm oil	✓		✓
Avoiding own-brand products		✓	
Buy/grow heritage breed or varieties	✓		
Selecting meats with less environmental impact	✓		
Eat bush/native foods	✓		
Eating crops that help bees	✓		
Breastfeeding	✓		
How food is treated			
Reduce food waste	✓	✓	
Green food preparation	✓		
Other behaviours			
Seed saving	✓		
Support food hubs/community kitchens		✓	

Appendix I- Ethics approval letter



Dear Associate Professor McGregor,

RE: Ethics project entitled: "Bringing Justice to the Table: Investigating how issues of food justice are implicated in 'green' consumer food behaviours in Australia"

Ref number: 5201400861

The Faculty of Science Human Research Ethics Sub-Committee has reviewed your application and granted final approval, effective 22nd September 2014. You may now commence your research.

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

http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/publications/attachments/e72.pdf.

The following personnel are authorised to conduct this research:

Associate Professor Andrew McGregor
Miss Tasmin-Lara Dilworth

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

Please note the following standard requirements of approval:

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

Progress Report 1 Due: 22nd September 2015
Progress Report 2 Due: 22nd September 2016
Progress Report 3 Due: 22nd September 2017
Progress Report 4 Due: 22nd September 2018
Final Report Due: 22nd September 2019

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

Progress reports and Final Reports are available at the following website:

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics/forms

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

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

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics/forms

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

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

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

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics/policy

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

If you need to provide a hard copy letter of Final Approval to an external organisation as evidence that you have Final Approval, please do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Secretariat at the address below.

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

Yours sincerely,
Richie Howitt, Chair
Faculty of Science Human Research Ethics Sub-Committee
Macquarie University
NSW 2109