Well-being in Community Food Organisations: Responding to alienation in the food system

D.J. Watson

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Essex Business School

University of Essex

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Abstract:

Community food organisations are part of a growing interest in local and alternative forms of food, which have widely been understood as a response to the failings of the dominant food system. Despite significant academic interest, few studies have sought to understand these alternatives from the perspective of well-being, although they are grounded in claims for a better food system. In this thesis I address this gap. In order to do so I draw on Marx's concept of alienation as the basis for understanding how well-being is constituted in four community food organisations in the East of England. In using a Marxist approach to well-being I seek to overcome the limitations of narrow, individualised conceptions of well-being that have predominated a resurgent discourse around well-being. Renewed interest in well-being and alternative food systems can be seen as reactions to the dominant logic of capital, which has prioritised economic growth and profit at the expense of human and planetary well-being. However, these potentially critical discourses have proved vulnerable to re-absorption by capital. I use Marx's concept of alienation to bring together critique of capitalism with an understanding of community food organisations as alternative spaces of production, which enhance well-being. Both classical and recent Marxian approaches have tended to emphasize critique, with little attention to the subjective experience of capitalism or alternatives to it. Drawing on alienation to inform a Marxian approach to well-being I unite structural critique with subjective experience. I use ethnographic and qualitative methods to document participation in community food organisations as an alternative, de-alienated experience. The data generated points to the important role these spaces can play in supporting well-being. It underlines how they facilitate social interaction, an active relationship with nature, and provide an opportunity for participants to realise a sense of agency and engage in meaningful work.

Keywords: Alienation, well-being, community, food, organisation, Marx

Preface: Everyday alienation

To some extent we are all concerned with food, but much of daily interaction with food is unreflective; the consumption of energy to fuel our bodies, however it is often much more than this. Certainly food has been central in my life for some time, a short career as a chef preceded a return to academia and eventually the empirical study of food contained within this thesis. In the interim my interest in food spilled into local food projects as well as leisure time. One encounter I experienced whilst foraging crystallized my understanding and interest in the alienation encapsulated in the modern food system, which has been a key motivation for this research. I hadn't really appreciated how far I had departed from mainstream food provisioning practices, until I was approached by staff from a Burger King whilst collecting crab apples from a tree outside the restaurant they worked in. I naturally assumed that they were interested in what I was doing as I suspected it wasn't an everyday occurrence. Indeed they were interested, concerned even. They offered me a meal from the restaurant, taking me for someone so hungry that I had been forced to seek food from the wild. The idea that I might actually choose to collect this food from my local environment had not crossed their mind and when I suggested that you could eat such food they were incredulous. Point blank refusing to taste any, despite my reassurances and witnessing me take a bite, instead they backed away looking at me like someone who had clearly taken leave of their senses. It was clear that I had quite a different conception of what might constitute food and where it could be sourced from than the two members of staff who approached me, but what also struck me was their concern. They were concerned about my welfare or well-being, albeit they offered to address this by offering me food that was clearly far removed from the sort that I was collecting. I wondered how we had formed such vastly different conceptions of what food is, or could be, but also reflected that we were both concerned with human need or well-being. They thought I was in drastic need of help and were concerned, whereas I was pursuing my interest in food by collecting wild ingredients that I would take home and make wine and preserves with, to feed myself

and my family. Although our actions were motivated by well-being in a general sense we had entirely different views on how food might produce that well-being. I wondered if they were aware of the multiple ways in which the production and consumption of fast food was bad for well-being. It seemed likely to me that they might be, but probably to a limited extent, it is only the sheer abstractness of the way in which food is produced that could obscure these realities from the people who were actually serving it. It is these feelings of alienation, of abstraction from the context of food, that most of us have little choice but to consume (crab apples can only provide so much nourishment), which the community food organisations involved in this research address. The sense in which we are removed in many sense from the places we live in and the people we live with because of the abstract economic relations that have come to define our lives was summed by one of the interviewees of this research, from a community farm. They talked about an analogy of not being involved in your community as being like the feeling of being a tourist, and compared their involvement in the farm to this:

> "It's like when you go on holiday and you're a tourist, and um and everybody else in the country, and they're involved in that country and you feel – when you're a tourist there – I don't really like the feeling of being a tourist. You feel like you're not properly involved, you're just visiting there and you're maybe not getting the full experience. And so getting involved in this thing and putting all your work into it and building the whole thing, and that sense of involvement and achievement is something that you wouldn't get really anywhere else."

This gives an insight as to how my experience as a participant and as an observer in four community food organisations brought home their potential to address alienation in the food system, which is the central focus of this thesis.

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List of abbreviations and acronyms used

AFI	Alternative Food Initiative
AFN	Alternative Food Network
AFS	Alternative Food System
AOC	Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée
BG	Big Garden Project
CFO	Community Food Organisation
CG	Community Garden
CSA	Community Supported Agriculture
HF	Hempsalls Community Farm
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
OT	The Oak Tree Low Carbon Farm
PCG	The People's Community Garden
PDO	Protected Designation of Origin

Identifier codes for quotes

P	Pilot Interview
S	Survey Respondent
Dir	Member of paid staff at community food organisation

Note: Numbers denote which transcript the quote is drawn from, so that 1 is the first interviewee and 23 is the last. Codes preceded by an S denote survey respondent as opposed to interviewee and where quotes from pilot interviews are used the number is preceded by a P. Interview quotes from staff at community food organisations are identified by the suffix 'Dir'. This suffix is used because all staff interviewed had a directing role in the project. In some surveys and interviews couples were interviewed together where this is the case the same number is used, but a letter distinguishes between speakers.

Tables and Figures

Chapter 1 – Introduction

"The twentieth century with its great comforts and great cries has produced immense alienation experiences." *The Poet* (In Ronald Blythe's 'Akenfield', 1969, p. 267)

1.1 Framing the Research

In this introductory chapter I set out the context for this study and outline the key theoretical framework, which I introduce in this first section. In the next section I expand on Marx's concept of alienation and briefly discuss its application in the context of the food system. Section 1.3 explores the limitations of a narrow individualised view of well-being that is dominating the current well-being agenda arguing for a more critical understanding of well-being informed by alienation. In section 1.4 I draw the links between well-being, alienation and the local and alternative food literature which I discuss in more depth in the next chapter. I then outline the major contributions of this study in section 1.5 before providing a summary of the overall structure of the thesis in the final section.

By virtue of its sustaining nature food is of interest to all of us, we depend on it and it contributes to our health and well-being in an immediate and essential sense (Morgan, 2010; Steel, 2008). However, our daily interaction with food is typically unreflective consumption that is taken for granted. Yet it is imbued with cultural meaning and the locus of social, political and academic discourse, contested and played out in the media, as well as our everyday lives (Harvey, McMeekin, & Warde, 2004, Intro. & Chapter 8). The daily food consumption choices we make are part of a wider constellation of social and material processes and structures. These choices have implications not just for our own health and well-being, they help shape the economy, transport networks and environmental conditions, on

a global as well as a local scale (Morgan, Marsden, & Murdoch, 2006; Introduction). The food system is therefore an intersection point for a wide range of competing issues, and is central not only in terms of the economy but also in realising well-being for human beings and their wider environment (Lang, Barling, & Caraher, 2009). Despite this multiplicity of functions the food system has been overwhelmingly shaped by its ability to produce profit.

The logic of capital which dominates the food system has relegated concern for human and planetary well-being beneath financial gain. This has produced greater choice and 'value for money' for consumers but has also produced detrimental impacts that numerous critics have pointed out (Carolan, 2011; Kneafsey et al., 2008; Lang, 2010; Norberg-Hodge, Merrifield, & Gorelick, 2002; Oosterveer & Sonnenfeld, 2012). Criticism of and dissatisfaction with the dominant agri-food system and its perceived problems has given rise to increasing academic and popular interest in local and alternative forms of food (Donald, Gertler, Gray, & Lobao, 2010; Murdoch, Marsden, & Banks, 2000). This study focuses on some of these responses, looking at four community food organisations (CFOs)[1] in particular. The production, distribution and consumption of food is now vastly complex (Kneafsey et al., 2008, p. 7), often reaching consumers via lengthy, international supply chains beyond their comprehension, or control. The separation of the spheres of production and consumption, via abstract value chains, is a key feature of the modern food system that has produced experiences of alienation. In contrast, the CFOs which are the topic of this study bring consumers into the world of production; an alternative, local form of food production. In doing so they offer an alternative experience of production and consumption to the alienating experiences of the dominant food system, and in doing so provide important opportunities to realise well-being.

Recent years have seen a renewed interest in well-being, not just in academic inquiry but politically, it has started to challenge the dominance of income based measures in measuring progress and

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[1] The rationale behind this term is provided in more detail in section 2.7 of the next chapter. The term is intended to capture organisational forms of local, alternative food which involve consumers in growing their own food, thereby bridging the gap between production and consumption by bringing them together in a community.

shaping policy (McGillivray, 2007, p. 3). Given the negative impact of a fixation on chasing profit in the food system, and more widely, this ought to be regarded as a positive sign. However, the discourse on well-being - particularly in policy circles – is being dominated by a narrow individualistic conceptualization of well-being that does little to challenge the dominant logic of capital and the structural inequalities it produces. In this study I use Marx's concept of alienation (Marx, 1959), as a conceptual lens, to shed light on how the organisation of production and consumption shapes subjective experiences of food. Alienation informs my critical understanding of the dominant food system, I also use it as the basis to examine the potential contribution of CFOS in supporting well-being and responding to alienation. The advantage of this approach lies in distinguishing critical forms and values of alternative and local food from the dominant mode of production, highlighting their potential to challenge it.

Well-being, alternative and local food are all heterogeneous concepts that have proved vulnerable to appropriation. The tendency of capital to absorb these concepts and turn them towards the creation and expansion of profit is reflected in the numerous products that draw on them as a selling point. From 'fit bits' to self-help books (see Maguire, 2008) and numerous local food products now lined up on supermarket shelves (Hein et al. p.291) to trendy, expensive cocktails using 'food waste' and 'foraged food' as alternative ingredients[2]. Despite their assimilation by capital these concepts remain reflective of a dissatisfaction with its alienating nature, ironically this is also part of the appeal of products that invoke them. The resurgence in the study and application of well-being, and growing interest in alternative and local food can both be understood as counter-movements to the model of capitalist development. Equally though they can also be part and parcel of it reflecting a dialectical

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[2] Fitbit produces a range of wearable products that use wireless technology to monitor fitness and exercise in order to inspire better heath. They draw on health and well-being in order to sell their products stating their mission: "To empower and inspire you to live a healthier, more active life. We design products and experiences that fit seamlessly into your life so you can achieve your health and fitness goals, whatever they may be." https://www.fitbit.com/uk/about <accessed 29/9/2016> The Duck and Waffle is located in the London's banking centre, the City of London. It's new cocktail menu appeals to interest in foraged food and food waste by using foraged ingredients like grass and bark, and banana skins and asparagus ends to create cocktails which retail at £14. https://duckandwaffle.com/duckpost/blog/urban-foraging-vs-urban-decay/ <accessed 29/9/2016>

tension (McClintock, 2014). To date, there have been relatively few studies that have sought to explicitly connect local and alternative food systems to well-being. This study adopts a well-being perspective whilst maintaining a critical stance. I seek to distinguish the critical nature of alternative and local food by exploring the constitution of well-being in community food organisations, which are not shaped by the logic of capital.

1.2 Alienation and food

Marxian analysis has frequently been deployed in the context of the food system, such as Friedman and McMichael's 'Food Regime' approach (Friedman & McMichael, 1989). This perspective brings "a structured perspective to the understanding of agriculture and food's role in capital accumulation across time and space" (McMichael, 2009b). The consequences of a food system driven by capital can be seen in the environmental costs brought about by more 'efficient' production. This efficiency has been achieved by substitution of industrial and chemical inputs for human labour and the introduction of new crop varieties under the 'green revolution' producing higher yields (Fuglie et al. 2007 & Tilman et al. 2002). Whilst this has reduced food prices in real terms for consumers it has also had very real costs for the environment: Degradation of land, salinization and contamination of water supplies, biodiversity loss, increased carbon emissions (Smith et al. 2007, IAASTD, 2009). The negative consequences are not limited to the environment, despite increased yields in food production the absolute number of people experiencing undernourishment has increased. Hunger remains a persistent problem, although the percentage of people experiencing it has reduced (Alexandratos & Bruinsma, 2012, pp. 5–6). The world now faces a growing obesity epidemic (O'Kane, 2012, pp. 270–1), this is not limited to the developed world, developing countries too are struggling to cope with rising levels of obesity, even though chronic hunger persists in the same context (Alexandratos & Bruinsma, 2012, p. 3). All the while food poverty is an increasing problem in the developed world as demonstrated by the rising number of food banks (Caraher & Dowler, 2014; Kirwan & Maye, 2012, p. 96).

Although critics have drawn on Marxian analysis in understanding these issues the concept of alienation has very rarely been used (see McClintock, 2010 for a notable exception). Although arguably it can be considered foundational to Marxist critique (Kalekin-Fishman & Langman, 2015). Alienation is typically considered as some sort of spiritual dislocation or isolation, a feeling of disaffection perceived to be common to modern society and frequently represented in popular culture – such as Camus's *l'etranger* (1942) – as well as academic writing (Kaufman in Schacht, 1971, p. xx). However, this conception of alienation as a metaphysical condition experienced by individuals is distinct from Marx's conception in important ways, most significantly the material and historical dimension to Marx's alienation (Sayers, 2011, pp. 1–2). Marx's concept of alienation incorporates the subjective experience of life under capitalism, with the structures of production and consumption that shape the material conditions of life. The concept of alienation is by no means exclusive to Marx, it has been used and defined in a number of different ways and its origins predate the writings of Marx (Padgett, 2007, p. 3; Schacht, 1971, Chapter 1). There has also been a great deal of debate as to how central alienation is to Marx, some have suggested that Marx discarded these early thoughts which are not obviously consistent with his later work (Sayers, 2011, Intro; Padgett 2007, pp. 3-4; Althusser, 1969). I do not to enter into this debate at length since it is not a central concern of this research, but in the next section I do consider some key contributions to this debate and the concept of alienation and how they stand in relation to my use of the concept. However, rather than attempting to disentangle my understanding of alienation from the plurality of the term's usage I draw predominantly on Marx's most detailed exposition of the concept contained in the *Economic & Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*[3].

Marx's conception of Alienation

Four different dimensions to alienation are identified by Marx in the *Manuscripts* (Marx, 1959, pp. 29–32; see also Padgett, 2007, pp. 7–8):

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[3] For conciseness I refer to this work at various points in this thesis as the *Manuscripts*.

- The estrangement or alienation of labourer from the product of their labour;

- alienation from the activity of labour itself;

- alienation from '*species being*';

- and finally alienation from one another as individuals.

These four forms of alienation require some unpacking, but it is probably fair to say that the two perceived to be most central to Marxist thought are the first two. It is the relations and conditions of labour which have received most attention in the body of Marxist thought and literature. However, it is the third form of alienation which is most significant in terms of well-being. In talking of an alienation from *species being* Marx invokes a notion of human nature (Fromm, 1967) and well-being that positions the other dimensions of alienation as destructive to it. This notion of human nature is central to the concept of alienation and how it relates to well-being. However, before considering the relevance of this, it is necessary to expand briefly on the different forms of alienation and how they relate to one another.

Marx builds his concept of alienation from a critique of political economy; central to which is the argument that it uncritically assumes the basic premises of the market system of exchange as facts, without first establishing them. To build a critique of capitalism Marx proceeds 'from an actual economic fact' as opposed to the political economist whose theory is said to rest on 'a fictitious primordial condition' (Marx 1844: 28). Introducing alienation, Marx begins with the relationship of the labourer to his or her product, that in investing their time and energy in a product they put 'life into the object' so it is no longer their own:

> "The alienation of the worker in his product means not only that his labor becomes an object, an external existence, but that it exists outside him, independently, as something alien to him, and that it becomes a power on its own confronting him. It means that the life which he has conferred on the object confronts him as something hostile and alien." (Marx, 1959, p. 29)

Marx is keenly aware of the extent to which human labour is dependent on 'external or sensuous nature,' both for the objects of labour and the subsistence needs of the worker (Marx, 1959, p. 29;

Marx, 1972, p. 283). This means that the condition of labour not only alienates the worker from their product, but also from sensuous nature. There are two elements to this, firstly the more natural resources are appropriated in labour the more the worker is able to produce objects independently (or alienated) from it. Secondly the worker becomes a receiver of his means of subsistence via wages rather than meeting them more directly, through working the land, for example (Marx 1959, p. 29). However, to speak of external nature and human nature in binary terms would be inaccurate. What Marx intends is that capitalist labour dis-embeds people from their natural environment, complete separation would be impossible.

> "That man's physical and spiritual life is linked to nature means simply that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature." (Marx 1959, p. 31).

The nature of labour as expressed in the relationship between the worker and their product is central for Marx and if the worker is alienated from his product then the activity of labour is itself alienating. Since labour is undertaken to earn wages it is 'not the satisfaction of a need; it is merely a means to satisfy needs external to it [via money].' (Marx, 1959, p. 30). Just as the product is not owned by the worker under wage labour neither does the labourer control the production process, this is dictated by his employer who pays his wages, this lack of agency over work is significant for Marx, since 'It belongs to another; it is the loss of his self' (Marx 1959, p. 30). From these two forms of alienation follows the third: Alienation from 'species-being'.

Although the third form of alienation follows, from the first two, it is only in introducing this third form alienation reveals itself as so destructive to well-being:

> "Man's species-being, both nature and his spiritual species-property, [is turned] into a being alien to him, into a means of his individual existence. It estranges from man his own body, as well as external nature and his spiritual aspect, his human aspect." (Marx 1959, p. 32)

This form of alienation rests on the idea that the human species' essential characteristic is labour, defined as free and conscious life activity to meet one's needs. Alienated or estranged labour results in people not only being alienated from external nature, but also from human nature or *species being*.

Productive life activity under capitalism predominantly takes the form of wage labour, not free conscious activity to meet human need, thereby denying the realisation of species being. The purpose of existence is reversed as Marx puts it (Marx 1959, p. 31). Under conditions of wage labour man's consciously chosen life activity is merely a means to his existence it is not his existence (i.e. he labours for wages rather than to meet his needs directly).

A direct corollary of this dimension of alienation is the estrangement of individuals from one another; "it estranges the life of the species and individual life, and secondly it makes individual life in its abstract form the purpose of the life of the species…" (Marx 1959, p. 32). In alienated labour the workers' activity is aimed toward meeting the needs of only themselves, as opposed to meeting the needs of an individual who is also part of a wider community or species. Given Marx's conception of human beings as social in their very nature this form of alienation can also be viewed as another way in which we become alienated from *species being* under capitalism.

On one hand Marx is providing a '…phenomenological description of social relations which arise under the conditions of capitalism.' (Padgett, 2007, p. 9). He is also arguing that these conditions are damaging to well-being and that labour should be structured in such a way as enable human beings to realise well-being, as opposed to being destructive of it. The focus on labour might be considered too narrow. For Marx labour is fundamental, not just in defining capitalism but life itself, it is the defining 'life activity' of humanity, this takes a very broad definition of labour as free and conscious life activity undertaken to meet human need (Marx, 1959). The purpose of labour in general then, is to create use value, not exchange value, but under capitalism exchange value takes precedence. The use value of a commodity concerns its material function and form, the human need it meets. Exchange of commodities necessitates an abstraction from use value, as value must be transformed into a universal equivalent (money) so that commodities can be exchanged.

> "As use values, commodities are, above all, of different qualities, but as exchange values they are merely different quantities, and consequently do not contain an atom of use value." (Marx, 1972, p. 128)

That exchange value becomes the overriding purpose under capital causes labour's central function to become estranged; dominated by the need to realise profit via the exchange value of products and commodities.

> "Use-values are produced by capitalists only because and in so far as they form the material substratum of exchange value, are the bearers of exchange-value." (Marx, 1972, p. 293)

Accordingly, the deepening progression of capitalism also represents a deepening of alienation as capital expands into ever more areas of life so too does alienation.

In contrast to the continuous understanding of capitalist accumulation as alienation that I have presented, Althusser has argued forcefully that there is an 'epistemological break' between the early work of Marx in the *Manuscripts*, written in 1844 and his later work from 1845 onwards (Althusser, 1969). He argues that at this juncture Marx broke away from critique that reflected a view of man as alienated from his species-being under capital, relying on an essence of man or account of human nature which Althusser regards as empiricist (positivist) and idealistic (Althusser, 1969, esp. Part 7). Althusser acknowledges the temptation to view capitalism as inhuman in an ethical sense, but that this invokes the concept of humanity as a counter which is an ideological concept not a theoretical concept and this is problematic:

> "Simply put, the recourse to ethics so deeply inscribed in every humanist ideology may play the part of an imaginary treatment of real problems. Once known, these problems are posed in precise terms; they are organizational problems of the forms of economic life, political life and individual life. To pose these problems correctly and to resolve them in reality, they must be called by their names, their *scientific names*. The slogan of humanism has no theoretical value…" (Althusser, 1969, p.247, emphasis in original)

However, I would argue that this is a misrepresentation or a misinterpretation of the position Marx expounds in the *Manuscripts* where he is very clear that the account of species-being is not a purely ideological construct, rather it is rooted in a material understanding of society and importantly human labour. The humanist perspective he presents is a synthesis not a purely materialist or theoretical account of human nature:

"Here we see how consistent naturalism or humanism is distinct from both idealism and materialism, and constitutes at the same time the unifying truth of both. We see also how only naturalism is capable of comprehending the action of world history." (Marx, 1959, p.69; see also Fromm, 1967, pp. 9-11)

Whilst I would agree that there is a moral claim implied in Marx's exposition of alienation I do not think this is necessarily limiting in the way that Althusser argues for the more 'scientific' approach that he sees in Marx's later work. There are of course other theorists who would argue that there is no such break and that the concept of alienation is evident throughout Marx's work (see Ollman, 1976; Fromm, 1967, Sayers, 2011). Whilst I would agree with this viewpoint, a more serious question for Althusser is what is lost by de-anchoring Marxist critique from its ethical dimension in refuting the account of human nature and good contained within the *Manuscripts*? Rejecting this in favour of a more scientific approach would seem to steer criticism of capitalism toward a more internal critique that ignores its human impact, how can this impact be understood meaningfully without some view of well-being or human nature? (See also Boltanski & Chiapello, 2007, p. X). Ollman has suggested that although Marx cannot be considered a moral thinker in the conventional sense, that his moral critique is embedded within a description of the social reality he sees, that the estrangement and degradation of the worker is self-evident (Ollman, 1976, Ch. 4). In this manner it is more implied and explicitly stated, but the task then is to build on this in a way that strengthens Marxian critique rather than weakens it as Althusser contends.

Althusser dismisses humanistic approaches to Marxism as having no theoretical value, but they have been applied and used empirically to great effect, one prominent example being Blauner's work. Blauner sets out to apply a philosophical understanding of alienation in an empirical context, seeking to understand the conditions under which "…the alienating tendencies of modern factory technology and work organization are intensified and under what conditions they are minimized and counteracted." (Blauner, 1964, p. vii). Contra Althusser, Blauner's research rests on the assumption that "…the alienation perspective can be used scientifically – rather than polemically…" (ibid). The aim of my research differs from Blauner, his interest lay in the alienating conditions of wage labour,

whereas in this study I am interested in the experiences of people engaging in production that is not structured by wage labour or the realisation of profit. Like Blauner though, this rests on the view that alienation is not ubiquitous in societies predominantly shaped by the logic of capital - although strong tendencies exist - and that the strength and depth of alienation will depend on the particular context and social and material relations defining it. The aim then is to understand the experiences of those engaging in a form of production, that is more in line with the genuine fulfilment of human need that Marx positioned as a counterpoint to alienation, and begin to understand how these experiences are produced by the social relations that structure them.

Although heavily influenced by Marx's early work Blauner's typology of alienation does not precisely follow that which I have set out here or which he sets out in the *Manuscripts*. Rather he develops categories relevant for the empirical setting of his research by drawing on the concept, focussing on four areas: *powerlessness*, the lack of control workers are able to exert over their work process and conditions of employment as well as a lack of influence in managerial processes as well as fundamentally for Marx the separation from the ownership of the means of production; *meaninglessness*, where the purpose and function of individuals' work is obscured due to the division of labour and a highly complex and large organisational structure; social alienation in terms of *isolation*, a lack of integration and membership in industrial communities; and *self-estrangement*, where work does not enable the individual to express his/her unique abilities, personality or potential, it becomes a means rather than an end in itself (ibid, Ch. 2). Whilst Blauner considers alienation a fruitful concept, he suggests it is limited by an assumption that alienated work is bad and non-alienated work is good bifurcating experiences of work into these categories (ibid, pp. 31-2). In my view this somewhat oversimplifies what Marx argues in the *Manuscripts*, although I would acknowledge that Marx is not necessarily clear in this respect. For Marx alienation represents a structural condition that defines work under capitalism, as I have already outlined, associated with this are damaging effects. This implies an account of human nature and well-being, Marx goes some way to explaining the former but very little light is shed on the latter. However, although Marx would

contend that alienated labour is in various ways damaging to human well-being and prevents the full realisation of human capabilities it does not necessarily follow that people would take no pleasure in such work.

Blauner's application of alienation is somewhat problematic because it moves away from the core definition I have presented here and there is some slippage between a structural understanding of alienation and a psycho-social understanding of alienation as experienced by individual workers. What is missing from Marx's account of alienation in the *Manuscripts* is a more detailed account of its counterpoint. Although others have tried to flesh this out theoretically (see Ollman, 1976). Later work has looked to build on seminal studies like Blauner's analysis of alienation (see Shantz, Alfes, & Truss, 2014; Shantz, Alfes, Bailey & Soane, 2015 for recent examples), but little has been done empirically to understand what de-alienated production might look like. I take the key dimensions of Marx's conception of alienation as my starting point in trying to understand how CFOs might contribute to well-being through de-alienated production. My approach is also informed by the literature on local and alternative food that has sought to underline its benefits, which I expand on in more detail in the next chapter. It is essential to understand how the logic of capital has acted as a guiding force in the development of the food system and in doing so deepened experiences of alienation for producers and consumers, before considering how de-alienated production may go some way to addressing this.

Food as commodity

"Above all, and drawing on Marx, is the definitive tension between use value and exchange value, and capital's drive to commodify all the conditions, activities, and means of human existence in pursuit of the expansion of (exchange) value, profit and accumulation. What this entails is especially well exemplified by food, the most essential and intimate product of relations between human society and (extra-) human nature." (Bernstein, 2015, p. 16)

What confirms an object's status as food? A straightforward definition would require that it possess qualities that enable us to digest it and for it to sustain us physically, in some way. But as Mary Douglas points out 'the taking of food has a social component as well as a biological one' (Douglas, 1972, p.

61; see also Soper, 2008, p. 575). Allowing that food functions as more than just sustenance, this remains what we would think of as its defining feature. Yet it is not this essential quality that has shaped the modern food system. Rather it has been overwhelmingly determined by the characterization of food as a commodity. That is not to say that food needn't provide nutrition, clearly commodities need to retain some use value as well as exchange value but this is not its defining feature within a capitalist system of food production. This creates a tension (Bernstein, 2015, p. 16; Moore, 2011b, p. 18), commodities need to create a profit first and foremost and this has implications for the way they are produced and consumed: "The value relations perspective reminds us that under capitalism, food is an exchange-value, first, and a use-value second." (McMichael, 2009a, p. 155). This points to the two-fold nature of labour, it produces use-value and exchange value, as the quote from McMichael acknowledges, although the latter takes precedence.

The double nature of labour is at the heart of defining it as alienating under capital (Holloway, 2012, Chapter 12). In the context of food this can observed in a variety of ways. For example, changing eating patterns, whereby individualised consumption of 'ready meals' and takeaway food outsource production to commercial entities replacing the preparation and consumption of a meal within the home (Soper, 2008, p. 577). This abstracts the labour of preparing a meal, labour that is defined by the purpose of meeting the need to feed ourselves and or our family. Instead this labour is performed as alienated labour, taking place in factories turning out ready meals that are also turning a profit. As Marx observed labour is inextricably connected to nature which provides the means for life, but also the instruments of labour, although this is often obscured under capitalism. In the case of a ready meal, labour time we might have spent washing, peeling and chopping is replaced by the act of piercing the film lid, before waiting a matter of minutes for an instant dinner. If we are minded to indulge in some home cooking, this process can be made altogether less messy and more convenient by purchasing pre-chopped and washed vegetables. Held up as offering the consumer choice and convenience, food in its more 'convenient' forms also represents opportunities to capture more profit, annexing forms of domestic labour which were part of social reproduction and converting them into

wage labour (Fraser, 2014, p. 62). This colonizes labour, enabling surplus value[4] to be realised in the preparation of vegetables that would otherwise be undertaken outside the sphere of capital. This labour is alienated because it is undertaken for wages, rather than to meet a need directly it has become abstracted in a way that the labour to produce a meal for oneself or one's family is not. By compressing the time taken to prepare a meal it also frees up the consumer from what is considered unproductive labour in capital – unproductive because it doesn't realise surplus value, not because it doesn't have a use value. This time can now be spent by working longer hours in a paid job, or through consumption that might realise some sort of profit, such as pay TV services (Potter & Westall, 2013, p. 168). The removal of the need to prepare food also de-socializes the experience of the meal, as individuals determine the tastes and times of their eating at the expense of a more communal eating experience.

> "What has gone missing is the sense of the meal as a prepared, shared, convivial event having its own intrinsic value in structuring time, fostering human exchange, and providing food for thought as well as bodily renewal." (Soper, 2008, p. 577)

As the need to socialise is pushed out of the everyday experience of preparing a meal it finds expression in eating out, restaurants and cafes creating other opportunities to capture value (Soper, 2008). What Soper observes here is not only the expansion of capitalism through the capture of domestic labour and the commodification of food but also its negative impact on well-being. Within the critique of capitalism expressed by the concept of alienation are the seeds of inspiration for an alternative vision of production and consumption. A catalogue of failed state regimes of communism have tarnished any positive vision emanating from Marx's writings, which is notoriously vague and alluded to rather than spelled out explicitly (see Marx, 1959, pp. 40–49). However, Marx's

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[4] Surplus value is the additional value created by workers beyond the cost of their own labour, so that if a worker's productivity over four hours creates enough value to cover the costs of employing them the rest creates surplus value which is appropriated by the capitalist:
"The fact that half a day's labour is necessary to keep the worker alive during 24 hours, does not in any way prevent him from working a whole day. Therefore, the value of labour-power, and the value which that labour-power creates in the labour-process, are two entirely different magnitudes; and this difference was what the capitalist had in mind when he was purchasing the labour-power… What was really decisive for him was the specific use-value which this commodity possesses of being a source not only of value, but of more value than it has itself." (Marx, 1972, pp. 300–1)

conceptualization of alienation conceives of capitalism as labour or productive activity in the interests of profit, and therefore the denial of productive conscious life activity in the interests of human need. The notion of well-being is central to this and can form the basis for understanding how alternatives might articulate a different mode of production and consumption driven by the realisation of well-being as opposed to profit.

1.3 The need for a critical approach to well-being

Questions over wealth as an indicator of well-being are not new as such but this critique has gained traction to the extent that various countries are now taking the well-being agenda much more seriously, not least in the UK. The government has incorporated well-being measures into its official statistics and has more recently set up a research centre to understand how national and local policy can do more to enhance well-being[5]. However if the concept of well-being is to effect a genuine shift then it needs to be allied with a critical understanding of how the economy as configured under capitalism is detrimental to well-being. Alienation in this sense can act as a bridging concept between critique of capital and the positive articulation of a mode of production driven by the aim of realising well-being.

A decisive factor in sparking the renewal of interest in well-being has been the failure of the prevailing economic system to deliver enhanced well-being in line with the increases in material wealth it has produced. This is famously identified in the Easterlin Paradox which identifies a gap between income and measures of subjective well-being questioning the assumption that wealth creates happiness (Easterlin & Angelescu, 2009 and Easterlin, 1974). Although Easterlin's claims have been challenged[6]

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[5]The What Works Well-being centre was set up last year to explore how local and national government can do more to support and enhance wellbeing by synthesizing existing research and extending it. <https://whatworkswell-being.org/about/> accessed 29/9/2016

[6] There has been a good deal of debate over the extent to which the Easterlin paradox holds, this is reviewed in more detail by Becchetti and Pelloni who conclude with this statement: "What it [the Easterlin paradox], however, undoubtedly says is that per capita income is not a reliable synthetic proxy of life satisfaction in the countries in which the paradox holds so that, economists and politicians may be misled if they believe that by increasing per capita income they also automatically raise life satisfaction of their citizens and electors." (Becchetti & Pelloni, 2013, pp. 114–115 emphasis in original)

(Stevenson & Wolfers, 2008) there is a substantial body of work that disputes positive association between wealth and well-being (For example: Daly, 2013; Daly, Cobb, & Cobb, 1994; Galbraith, 1958; Sidelsky & Sidelsky, 2012) and recent adoption of non-economic indicators for measuring well-being suggests that such criticism is far from unfounded (Dolan, Peasgood, & White, 2008; McGillivray, 2007; Nevarez, 2011). The position then of Gross National Product (GNP) as default measure of societal progress looks increasingly tenuous, although it remains the 'quintessential' indicator for well-being (McGillivray, 2007, p. 6) This has caused many economists to move away from the traditional focus on income and return to first principles in evaluating happiness or subjective well-being. A central figure in this trend has been Richard Layard, and his key text "Happiness: Lessons from a New Science" (2005). Whilst this is certainly a change in direction it is also a return to the fundamental basis of economics in the form of Bentham's utilitarianism (Layard, 2006, 2009), with happiness as the central organising principle which was latterly overshadowed by wealth (Bruni & Porta, 2005).

Well-being is often used as part of the sales pitch for all sorts of products, if not explicitly then implicitly in the lives and bodies we are encouraged to aspire to via our consumption of these products. Besides achieving the aim of selling us stuff this can also solidify the idea that well-being is an individual pursuit that can be achieved through the consumption of such products (Dittmar, 2007; Pickering, 2012). Thus conspicuous consumption in the name of well-being can contribute to a warped idealization of consumer culture (Sointu, 2005; Soper, 2008). The role that well-being plays in facilitating consumption has led some to describe happiness as an industry rather than science (Davies, 2015). Hancock and Tyler note the permeation of management discourse into everyday life in the form of self-help and lifestyle magazines which extol the virtues of self-management in order to succeed and achieve greater well-being (Hancock & Tyler, 2004; see also Maguire, 2008). Increased interest in measuring happiness can actually serve the aims of capital whilst masquerading as critique. This point is nicely illustrated at Copenhagen airport in Denmark, a country which frequently tops world well-being polls (Helliwell, Layard, & Sachs, 2016; Helliwell, Layard, Sachs, & Council, 2013) where a prominent sign greets you enjoining you to celebrate this achievement with a glass of its most famous

export[7]. Well-being in this sense has not moved away from an individualised conception, this is a feature of what Atkinson calls the dominant framing of well-being (Atkinson, 2013). This individualisation is paralleled in some of the problems of the modern food system, for instance the obesity epidemic, where blame and solutions are framed as an individual responsibility (DeLind, 2010; Julier, 2013). Rather than looking at structural causes government strategy tends instead to support and encourage individuals to make the 'right choices' rather than looking at the wider context which is shaping unhealthy choices (Health, 2004; Lang, 2009, p. 329; Mitchell, 2011). This individualisation of well-being supports the wider agenda of the neo-liberal state in rolling back social welfare policies, leaving the individual to fend for themselves (Potter & Westall, 2013; Ward & Meyer, 2009). However, individual consumers have also driven political movements that have sought to reshape the food system along more socially and ecologically responsible lines. Tensions within this type of reform of the food system (Morgan, 2010) highlight the paradoxical nature of consumerism. On the one hand complicit in a mode of production (and consumption) that is highly damaging, on the other a source of potential political confrontation with this system (Soper, 2007; Soper, 2008).

There is a need for an approach to well-being that cannot be made complicit with capitalism, but rather is capable of contesting it. I draw on Marx's conception of alienation, which identifies the way in which capital is detrimental to well-being whilst also evoking a positive alternative vision. The concept of alienation highlights the way in which the structures of capitalism disconnect people and nature and from one another, but also deny the individual the opportunity of self-realisation through productive activity. In order to develop this positive vision we need to explore those spaces outside of capital. If we are to move forward in understanding how alternative structures of production can realise well-being, we must look to those forms of productive activity which exist outside of capitalism. These spaces are de-alienated in the sense that productive activity is not structured by the logic of

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[7] Arriving at Copenhagen airport you are met with a large brightly lit advertisement encouraging you to toast the well-being success of Denmark with a glass of Carlsberg Export (see <https://vimeo.com/99039536> accessed 28/6/16). This highlights the way in which the shifting political agenda towards well-being can also be appropriated for commercial ends.

capital. Much of the literature on local and alternative food speaks to this notion of an alternative vision and therefore alienation and well-being, although not always in explicit terms.

1.4 The critical potential of local and alternative food

The emergence of alternative food systems in reaction to the conventional or placeless food system has been heralded as a potential site of resistance to capitalist hegemony (Ayres & Bosia, 2011; O'Hara & Stagl, 2001; Starr, 2010; Watts, Ilbery, & Maye, 2005, p. 33). Despite its relevance the concept of alienation rarely crops up in the literature on alternative food but it overlaps with other concepts often utilized to understand alternative food systems. For example several scholars have turned to the concept of embeddeness in order to understand local and alternative food (Feagan & Morris, 2009; Hinrichs, 2000; Murdoch, Marsden, & Banks, 2000; Sage, Keohane, & O'Mahony, 2011; Sage, 2003; Winter, 2003). Studies utilising this approach have drawn attention to how the socially constituted nature of economic structures *embed* alternative food differently to the dominant food system. We can see the parallel here with alienation, production relations under capitalism (as expressed by abstract or alienated labour) define conventional food production as *disembedded* or alienated from its local, social and material context (Meyer, Coveney, Henderson, Ward, & Taylor, 2012; O'Hara & Stagl, 2001). Under capitalism social relations are expressed as economic transactions (Fraser, 2014, p. 66) and this can have an alienating effect. Although the act of consumption appears to enable people to express agency (Dickens, 2009, p. 111), this is limited to the market and constrained by the resources different consumers possess. This lack of control has been brought into focus by various food scares (Jackson, 2010), in contrast with local and alternative food which is considered to be more tangibly embedded, offering greater traceability.

> "...like when my dad came to stay he wanted to go do food shopping, you know my step mother really enjoys, wanted to go, we went to the greengrocer, and it just felt horrible because she was just buying stuff from South Africa. Buying stuff that was totally not seasonal and I kind of felt really awful doing it. We got home and she made this Broccoli Quinoa salady thing and was really excited about this recipe and I did not feel excited because I didn't know where the Broccoli had come from and I felt like this is, this sucks this is not… …Well a) it made me feel worried that it could have been sprayed with pesticides and I think with things like Broccoli it's in the whole vegetable, you

can't wash it off. You know so I thought ok I'm probably eating horrible stuff here and also it didn't really taste that good so I was thinking right ok it doesn't really taste that good, it's probably been sprayed with loads of crap and also I just don't know where it's been. I've got no idea when it was harvested, it could of sat in the greengrocers for days, probably no vitamins really, probably not much left in it anyway… Anyway it didn't feel as fresh. Even if nutritionally it's not that different, it doesn't feel the same…I've got no control over of this, all I've got is my money and that doesn't feel good at all, like I know that with food there is a monetary exchange that goes on and there is with the farm but when it's just money that's involved it's rubbish. It feels really cheap, even if the vegetables are expensive it feels like you're throwing money at something, there's nothing in it, you don't know anything about it" (Excerpt from pilot interview with CFO participant)

Connection to the land and the severance of this connection in the conventional food system plays a key role in defining alternatives and their appeal. Introducing her notion of critical agrarianism, Carlisle talks of the "appeal to universal human experience in describing the transformative possibilities of cultivation, celebrating the potential for literal common ground" (Carlisle, 2013, p. 10). The importance of human interaction with nature has been highlighted as a key factor influencing well-being (Bhatti & Church, 2004, p. 40; Haybron, 2011; McClintock, 2010, pp. 201–2). This would be no surprise to Marx, who understood humanity and nature as deeply connected parts of the same whole, but the growing of food also entails a more active relationship with nature. As Wittman puts it, agrarian citizenship pays "attention to the ways in which nature, and land, are constitutive of the citizenship relation, rather than simply an object of it" (Wittman, 2009, p. 807).

> "yeah it's just nice to walk down the path and I mean have a look round, you know as I walk into the place. I'll always look round and you know see what's new, how things are growing you know. I sort of, there's a sense of um, you know arriving somewhere familiar, but more than familiar it's somewhere that I sort of feel like I've got a, sort of gotta stake in and some kind of custody of. I feel like I'm, you know I'm part of it really so when I arrive I feel very much like I belong there."
> (Excerpt from pilot interview with CFO participant)

This comment highlights more than a connection to the environment, it is expressive of a sense of place and a productive relationship with nature that Marx regarded as central to human activity (Marx, 1959, p. 29). Under capitalism this is mediated by structures of wage labour and commodity exchange but in community food organisations it is experienced directly, it is de-alienated. A connection to the land also connects people with one another through the work of growing food together. Reiterating this connection is crucial to unpicking the alienation constituted in a capitalist agricultural system:

"ties between people and land may prove central to the success of broader social struggles, because they reinforce (and are reinforced by) affective ties between people and people"(Carlisle, 2013, p. 5).

> "Sometimes, it [food] I mean it gives us a reason to be there for a start, it also gives us a common, a common purpose for something we're doing. If we're sharing a task, if we're all planting beans together or whatever it gives us a you know. You'll have a snippet of a conversation and then you'll go 'ooh are you planting yours that way round or that way round or how deep are you pushing them into the seed pod thing?' And so you'll be interrupting your dialogue with stuff, which often means it keeps you talking. So it keeps your dialogue going and sometimes it'll give you a break if you've come to the end of a conversation, and you'll distract yourself with something farmy and then you can launch into something different. So it like annotates your interactions quite nicely." (Excerpt from pilot interview with CFO participant)

In the next chapter I go into much more depth in exploring the literature on alternative and local food, but this brief discussion serves to highlight how community food organisations can function as de-alienated spaces which provide opportunities to realise well-being. Earlier in this introductory chapter I observed that local and alternative food are heterogeneous terms, they are used in relation to a wide range of different crystallizations of the food system. This study focuses on four particular crystallizations which I refer to as community food organisations (CFO). I return to issues of terminology and definition in the discussion of the literature in the next chapter, but the reason for adopting this term is because it signals projects which involve people within the local community in the production of food for that community. The de-alienated nature of production in CFOs guided the selection of them as research sites, as I have argued for the need to focus on spaces outside of capital. Despite the dominant influence of capital examples of de-alienated space are more readily apparent than one might think. They can be found in everyday activities that constitute labour, defined in a broad sense which are not undertaken for wages or profit. As Fraser has observed life is not capital all the way down, in fact it depends on what she calls "background conditions of possibility"'. These conditions also act as "reservoirs of 'non-economic' normativity… pregnant with critical-political possibility" (Fraser, 2014, p. 69). It is for these reasons this study examines CFOs where production is not defined by the goal of profit or income. The CFOs bring people into a form of collective cultivation of fruit and vegetables, which are then consumed by participants in return for their labour. Beyond

this, the specific form and nature of each organisation varies, and this is expanded on in much more detail in chapter 4 which profiles the four projects involved in the research.

1.5 The aims and contribution of the research

The main aim of this research is to understand how the alternative nature of production in CFOs enables people to realise capabilities that are beneficial to their well-being, and how far this construction of well-being can be considered a critical response to alienation in the food system. In addressing this aim this study seeks to understand how CFOs support well-being, thereby addressing the different dimensions of alienation described earlier in this chapter. Although there is a sizable body of research and literature on local and alternative food and within that a number of studies which examine the CFOs that this study looks at, community gardens and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)[8], very few studies have adopted a well-being perspective. Growing interest in alternative and local food owes much to the excesses of the dominant, global or 'placeless' food system (Allen, 2010; Donald, Gertler, Gray, & Lobao, 2010; Feagan, 2007) against which they have been held up as a potential solution (Allen, FitzSimmons, Goodman, & Warner, 2003; Jones, 2012; Kirwan, Ilbery, Maye, & Carey, 2013; Kirwan & Maye, 2012). Despite a commonly held assumption that local and alternative food is better for us in a variety of ways (Born & Purcell, 2006), well-being is a concept that is rarely used within the existing literature, although there are a number of well-being related benefits associated with forms of local and alternative food (Kingsley, Townsend, & Henderson-Wilson, 2009, p. 209). This research addresses that gap, drawing on Marx's concept of alienation in framing the way in which the construction of well-being is understood. This critical Marxian perspective is essential since although various studies have pointed to the potential of local

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[8] There is not one agreed definition of CSA but the definition applied by the Soil Association captures their essential feature, which centres on sharing the risks and rewards of production: "Community Supported Agriculture means any food, fuel or fibre producing initiative where the community shares the risks and rewards of production, whether through ownership, investment, sharing the costs of production, or provision of labour" (Soil Association, 2011, p. 4). Community Gardens are also vaguely defined but are typically spaces that bring members of the community together in a space of cultivation, although the activites undertaken within these spaces can be wide ranging (Firth et al., 2011, p. 556). I explore the literature on both in more depth in section 2.7 of the next chapter.

and alternative forms of food they have also been subject to sustained critique for failing to extricate themselves from the dominant food system (Campbell, 2001; DuPuis & Goodman, 2005; Guthman, 2008; Myers & Sbicca, 2015).

Empirically the research adds much needed detail to our understanding of the experience of CSA and community gardens. These type of organisations are often swallowed up in broader discussions of local and alternative food with little attention to how particular crystallizations differ (Renting, 2012; Winter, 2003). This is crucial in terms of understanding the extent to which different forms of local and alternative food might be considered critical in respect of the dominant capitalist food system and therefore genuinely alternative. Empirical in depth studies of CSA in particular are rare (Hayden & Buck, 2012, p. 333), given the growth in number of these (Flora & Bregendahl, 2012) and the significant departure they take from the conventional organisation of production they are an important site for research. Therefore this study adds to the body of knowledge on alternative and local food, on CSAs and community gardens in particular.

Alienation is also not frequently utilised as a way of understanding the problems in the food system or potential solutions (House & Figueroa, 2015; McClintock, 2010 are rare exceptions). Marxian analysis of capitalism (including within the context of the food system) has to some extent tended to ignore the potential conceptual contribution of alienation. The majority of work developing the critique of Marx's more prominent later works (For example Araghi, 2003; Bernstein, 2006; McMichael, 2009a; Moore, 2010). In taking forward alienation as conceptual basis for elaborating a well-being approach this research also contributes to this body of literature. Well-being has very rarely been integrated with a Marxist approach. Although Marx's work offers a powerful critique of how damaging to well-being capital is, it has been overlooked conceptually.

The current well-being agenda has rarely addressed the fundamentally damaging nature of capital, despite being motivated in part by capitalism's failure to substantially improve well-being. Rather this discourse has been dominated by quite narrow individualistic understandings of well-being and how

policy might address well-being, conceived in this way (Atkinson, 2013). These approaches have confined themselves to dealing with the effects of capital rather than addressing its roots and therefore the root causes of poor well-being. This study makes an important contribution to this gap in the well-being literature by taking a Marxian approach to well-being.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

The substantive content of the thesis is organised over seven chapters comprising of a review of the literature, the methodology employed in the study, four chapters of empirical findings and a chapter devoted to the discussion of these findings. These chapters are bookended by this introductory chapter and a concluding chapter that underlines the contributions and implications arising from the research.

Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature which I have touched upon already in this introductory chapter. It begins by examining the development of the food system from the perspective of alienation, interpreting this process of 'development' as a deepening of alienation and exploring some of the implications of this for well-being. One of these implications has been the growth in alternative and local forms of food, this is explored in the next four sections of this chapter, which discusses how these forms have tried to respond critically, and some of their limitations. I also draw out some key themes from the literature that inform my understanding of well-being and the methodological approach. The recapture and re-assimilation of alternative forms by the mainstream food system and the failure to break with it in any significant way informs this research's focus on CFOs which is the topic of the next section. This distinguishes CSA and community gardens as particular forms of CFO which are de-alienated spaces, where well-being is being constructed through the everyday practices within them. These are considered not just as places which resist the dominant, but sites of a positive articulation of an alternative based on satisfying well-being. Following on from this, the final section critically explores the well-being discourse. I argue for a Marxian approach to understanding well-being, which is also informed by the literature on alternative and local food. Although this remains

open to participants' understandings and experiences of how well-being is realised in the four CFOs studied.

The application of this understanding of well-being is further outlined in chapter 3 which integrates the theoretical position outlined in chapter 2 with the methodological approach of the research. The research adopts qualitative and ethnographic methods in seeking to understand the constitution of well-being in CFOs. In this chapter I expand on the reasons for this approach and how this informed the research design, sampling and methods of generating data. I also dedicate some space to reflecting on the implications of using these methods and the role of the researcher, in terms of affecting the way in which data is collected and interpreted. In this chapter I also specify how the main aim of the research, to understand how the construction of well-being in CFOs can be understood as a critical response to alienation in the food system, informed key sub questions and outline the process of data collection and analysis.

Chapter 4 constitutes the first chapter of findings, whilst this is largely descriptive it draws extensively on data collected in qualitative interviews and from ethnographic field notes. I set out the empirical context in much greater detail, describing each different CFO in depth. This includes the material setting of each project, the organisational structure and the origins of the CFOs, and the participants involved. These descriptions are not only informative for the reader but they are also significant in terms of their implications for how well-being is constituted in these different spaces. As I have already underlined the particular form or organisation defines the extent and manner in which well-being is realised. I therefore refer back to these descriptions which have an impact on the main thematic findings presented in chapters 5, 6 and 7.

The next three chapters constitutes the bulk of the empirical findings, whilst the approach to studying well-being taken was open, the interpretation of the data is informed by the theoretical approach outlined in the literature review (chapter 2). Although the process of analysing the data was iterative and led by the data (this is specified in more depth in chapter 3), the findings are presented in three

thematic sections that are framed by Marx's conception of alienation: Chapter 5) Redefining relationships with Nature; Chapter 6) Growing community and; Chapter 7) Work and Agency. In this introduction I have set out the dimensions of alienation which Marx considered to be realised through the nature of production under capital. Capitalist labour abstracts individuals from nature, and from one another through the alienating experience of labour which also removes control over the products of labour. Therefore I present the analysis of CFOs in contrast to these dimensions: The extent to which they rebuild relationships with nature and one another through community and reinstall a sense of agency and meaning in work through an alternative kind of production. I elaborate more on nature of alienation throughout the chapters and it acts as a connecting thread throughout this thesis.

Chapter 8 is the final substantive chapter of the thesis, this considers the findings presented in the four preceding chapters in relation to the research questions and the relevant literature. In discussing the data I also explore some of the negative aspects of CFOS identified in the data and critically examine the extent to which the CFOs can be considered a genuine response to alienation as defined by Marx. I also reflect on what this research can tell us more widely about the critical potential of well-being. The concluding chapter briefly summarises the main findings and contribution of the research before considering implications and limitations of the research. All further material is supplementary consisting of appendices and references supporting the substantive content of the thesis.

Chapter 2 – Responding to alienation in the food system

"I want a food system that affords people and nations the capabilities to develop and enhance their well-being" (Carolan, 2011, p. 3)

Introduction

In this chapter I explore the responses to alienation in the food system that can be seen in the emergence of local and alternative food and consider the extent to which we might consider these as genuine forms of resistance and critique. Before reviewing the literature on alternative and local food I expand on the discussion of alienation in the food system which I commenced in the introductory chapter. In discussing the alternative and local food literature I seek to draw out some key themes within it and their relevance to this study over the course of sections 2.2 through to 2.6. Although well-being is implicit in much of the writing on alternative and local food it rarely surfaces as an explicit concept. This burgeoning discourse has made valuable contributions highlighting a number of ways in which alternative and local food might benefit well-being. However, there are limitations which I argue point to the need to focus our interest on forms that re-define the conditions of production and consumption. I turn to these in section 2.7 where I examine community food organisations (CFOs) as a potential space of genuine resistance and alterity. These spaces are considered as spaces that resist alienation and in doing so enable well-being to be realised. Whilst the reinvigorated discourse around well-being can be seen as expressive of a discontent regarding the failures of capitalism to enhance

well-being, individualised approaches to well-being fail to incorporate this critique, I discuss the limitations of this in section 2.8. I conclude by bringing alienation and well-being together into a conceptual framework to guide our understanding of CFOs. In a sense alienation and well-being can be seen as two sides of the same coin, but for this to be true our understanding of well-being needs to be guided by the critique embodied in the concept of alienation which underlines how the structural conditions of production and consumption are subjectively experienced under capitalism.

2.1 The hegemony of capital and deepening alienation in the food system

In the introductory chapter I introduced the alienation as a conceptual lens for understanding the food system and briefly discussed some instances of this. This process of alienation has been realised through a much longer historical development of the food system, according to the logic of capital. The global division of labour that can be seen in today's food system has its roots in the expansion of colonial powers in the first food regime (Friedman & McMichael, 1989)[9]. Production of commodities, like sugar, in the colonies produced a mutually beneficial circle (for capital), whereby free labour, in the form of slaves, supplied the labour power to produce cheap commodities. These commodities would increasingly feed the working poor of England (Mintz, 2013; Moore, 2010, p. 6) which was then the 'workshop of the world' (McMichael, 2009b, p. 141). This circle of commodities and labour underlines how "Labor produces not only commodities; it produces itself and the worker as a commodity" (Marx 1959; p. 31); this is as true in the case of the slaves being put to work in sugar fields as it is of the working class of industrial England. Although, it is perhaps more obvious in the case of slaves, who are bought and sold like any other commodity, but equally the price of the industrial worker's labour power and therefore his wages are determined by the market.

> "The value of the worker as capital rises according to demand and supply, and physically too his existence, his life, was and is looked upon as a supply of a commodity like any other. The worker

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[9] McMichael and Friedman identify three food regimes to date: the first from 1870-1930s; the second from 1950s-1970s and the third and current regime late 1980s to today. It should be noted that although today's food system has emerged out of a particular historical context this seemingly linear progression of food regimes encompasses a range of complex and contested processes such that this cannot be viewed as 'natural' progression or teleological.

produces capital, capital produces him – hence he produces himself, and man as worker, as a commodity, is the product of this entire cycle" (Marx, 1959, p. 37)

In both cases labour is experienced as alienated labour, again the denial of freedom is perhaps more obvious and qualitatively different for the slave, but both are subjugated to the power of capital.

Goody traces the development of processed food back to military expansion in the colonial period which drove demand for canned food in particular, this went hand in hand with industrialisation, whereby "Mechanisation permitted the domestication and purification of foreign foods." (Goody, 2013, p. 81). The production of food commodities to be used as inputs in the food processing industry was a key step in industrializing the food system (Friedman & McMichael, 1989). Industrialisation enabled the internationalisation of the food system but also had a significant impact on domestic consumption practices. Sugar produced in colonial outposts of the British Empire found its market in working class diets through staples like tea and jam, this in turn supported the shift in working patterns associated with urbanisation and industrialisation by supplying high calorie fast food (Mintz, 2013). This reliance on fast food to support working patterns dictated by capital is readily apparent today in the huge range of products and restaurants available to cater to our busy lives. Reducing the role of food to mere fuel for labour power to keep the engines of accumulation running degrades eating to an 'animal function'; no longer is it realised as a human need, but rather as a means to reproducing the commodity of labour. (Marx 1959, p.30).

Although initially a small part of people's diets, demand for processed food increased as a result of the severing of the working class from primary production of food (Goody, 2013). The increased availability of highly processed and energy dense foods implicated in today's health problems (Caraher & Coveney, 2004) stems from much earlier globalisation of the food system associated with the expansion of capital. Urbanisation and enclosure of common agricultural land (Duggett, 1975; Wittman, 2009) abstracted much of the working class from the arena of food production. The industrialisation and mechanisation of the food system, that enabled its globalisation, was therefore accompanied by huge social change; as a "… a whole new series of agents now intervened between

the producer and the consumer." (Goody, 2013, p.82). The enclosure of common land prevented people working it in order to meet their own needs, this is a defining moment of alienation in the development of capitalism. Deprived of the ability to produce for themselves the rural population were drawn into a relation of wage labour, and towards urban centres in order to earn the money with which to buy products to meet their needs. This is a key transition in labour form, individuals no longer produce use values for themselves but produce commodities for exchange. Thus their labour activity becomes alien, removed from them.

> "This relation is the relation of the worker to his own activity as an alien activity not belonging to him; it is activity as suffering, strength as weakness, begetting as emasculating, the worker's own physical and mental energy, his personal life – for what is life but activity? – as an activity which is turned against him, independent of him and not belonging to him." (Marx, 1959, p.31).

It is clear from this quote, that integral to the concept of alienation is the notion that this is detrimental to human beings, physically and mentally, in short to their well-being.

Capitalist labour does not only realize the alienation of the worker from the products and process of labour but also engenders "the separation of social production from its natural biological base" (McMichael, 2009b, p. 161), creating a rift in the social and ecological metabolism or exchange between humans and nature (Clark & York, 2005; McClintock, 2010; Wittman, 2009). Since labour defines our interaction with nature, alienated labour also means an alienation from nature

> ''Labour is, first of all, a process between man and nature, a process by which man, through his own actions, mediates, regulates and controls the metabolism between himself and nature'' (Marx quoted in McClintock, 2010, p. 192)

The theory of 'metabolic rift' has been deployed as a way of understanding this rupture between nature and humanity, which can be seen within the food system in a variety of ways. This was theorised by Marx most explicitly in his writing on soil exhaustion in nineteenth century Europe (Böhm, Misoczky, & Moog, 2012). The importation of guano (bird droppings,) as a soil improver in nineteenth century Europe became a necessity as more intensive agricultural methods began to exhaust the soil. As these stocks themselves ran low, industrial agriculture turned to the emerging synthetic fertilizer industry (Clark & York, 2005, p. 404; Foster, 2002; McClintock, 2010, p. 194). The appropriation of

nature's free gifts in the form of soil fertility and guano by the productive forces of capital functioned as an increase in fixed capital (Moore, 2010, 2011b). However, the imperative to not only maintain this level of productivity growth, but increase it, has perpetuated the need to keep on discovering or developing new sources of fertility. Yield growth was sustained by the green revolution which extended to areas of the developing world by the 1950s, 60s and 70s, this was pre-figured by production gains in established capitalist nation states, most notably the US (Friedman & McMichael, 1989; Moore, 2010). Gains in production engender increased reliance on external inputs; first natural in the form of guano but subsequently replaced by synthetic fertilisers (Alexandratos & Bruinsma, 2012, Chapter 4) and hybrid plant seeds, which farmers could not produce themselves (Friedman & McMichael, 1989). This is illustrative of "capitalism's antagonistic relation to the environment" (Foster, 2002, p. 2) which is borne out of the alienation from nature realised in the structure of labour, despite our intrinsic dependence and interrelationship with it. Given the integral relationship between humanity and nature this is not so much separation from nature but an alienation from our own human nature which is continuous with external nature[10].

> "In estranging from man nature, and himself, his own active functions, his life activity, estranged labor estranges the species from man." (Marx, 1959, p.31)

The continued intensification and industrialisation of the food system further alienates it from its natural context, but it is also part of the continual expansion of the sphere of capitalist production – into fertilisers and herbicides for example. This process takes shape in the current food system not just through continued use of herbicides, pesticides and fertiliser but also the development of genetically modified (GM) seeds and plants.

The safety of GM crops in regard to human health is an important issue (Domingo & Giné Bordonaba, 2011; Jacobsen, Sørensen, Pedersen, & Weiner, 2013), but the way in which this biotechnical innovation changes the production of food is significant in other ways. It enables commodification to

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[10] See also Moore for a critique of metabolic rift theory which he argues separates society and environment into different spheres when in reality capitalism should be considered as a 'world-ecology' that is a matrix of socio-ecological relations (Moore, 2011b).

further penetrate the food system as nature's free gift of soil fertility is replaced (having been exhausted) with GM 'super seeds' supported with a host of other inputs (Moore, 2010, p. 8). Notwithstanding serious doubts over the ability of such products to achieve their claimed potential in yields (Moore, 2010, pp. 15–16), they enable the large corporations producing them to wrest control of production from farmers (Kloppenburg, 2014; Shiva & Jalees, 2006). Besides reducing farmer autonomy, this amounts to a more general enclosure of a common resource, in the form of seeds (Douwe van der Ploeg, 2010, p. 5; Shiva & Jalees, 2006). The growth in GM seeds is not only de-naturalizing the production of food but it is also transforming the ability of producers to control the production – and therefore the labour – process. This concentrates the production of food into the hands of larger corporate entities, by redistributing "wealth and power from cultivators to capital" (Moore, 2010, p. 5) pushing smaller producers out of business and into waged labour in urban centres. Essentially this is a continuation of the enclosures which were integral to the establishment of capitalist agriculture and ongoing alienation, wrought by the organisation of production and consumption under capital. This trajectory has significant implications for consumption, not only because the way food is produced has direct impact on what and how it is consumed, but because the same logic that has shaped the development of production is at play in the arena of consumption.

The vast majority of people in the developed world are confined to the role of consumer, although lengthy allotment waiting lists (Campbell & Campbell, 2013) suggest the desire to reconnect with the production of food has not been completely erased. The dominance of supermarkets in the retail landscape also means that most consumers are actually quite limited in terms of retail outlet choice (Caraher & Coveney, 2004). At the same time they are confronted with a bewildering and ever expanding array of food products[11], more choice does not necessarily equate to better choice though

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[11] A quick search of one major UK retailer for white bread revealed 47 products listed, this was conservative compared with some other exploratory searches on other retailer sites. Notably the search results did not yield a wide array of highly differentiated products but rather numerous versions of sliced or non-sliced white loaves which appear very similar. Conventional economic theory would suggest this level of choice on a basic product can only be good for the consumer, however if they are expected to exercise discretion in their consumption choices this would suggest the act of going shopping could be a very lengthy and complex procedure.

(Dixon & Banwell, 2004), and marketing is designed to steer consumers toward those which benefit profits not consumer health (Ally et al., 2014). This is not only a consequence of the pursuit of profit as the primary goal, but a result of the way in which capitalism concentrates power in the market into the hands of a few large corporate players, whilst declaring greater choice for supposedly empowered consumers. The emergence of supermarkets as powerful players in the food system is a phenomenon that grew out of the expansion and development of processed, durable food which positioned them as the key retailer, particularly for urban populations, as reliance on fresh markets receded (Goody, 2013). Therefore supermarkets are key actors in the food chain, who consumers must trust to provision them with food, trust which was shaken with the recent discovery of horsemeat in a range of UK supermarket products. This revelation served to make consumers conscious of the fact that they are largely dependent on a system that they cannot fully trust, yet have very little choice about where else they can go. It is not surprising then that the scandal prompted many consumers to seek more local supply which offered greater traceability[12]. This points to a lack of agency that consumers have in meeting their food provisioning needs, control over the products they consume being reduced to the choice available in the market. This is despite increased pressure on the consumer to be more conscious of the consequences of their consumption, and adjust it accordingly. Marx considered consciousness as a defining characteristic of human beings yet viewed the ability to express this as compromised by alienation under capitalism (Marx, 1959, esp. pp.31-2). The choice available to us in consumption "…appears, temporarily at least, to realise humans' distinctive species-being, their capability to exercise control over their lives" (Dickens, 2009 p.111). However their ability to express this control is reduced to their consumption choices. Clearly shifts in consumer spending can be very

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http://www.tesco.com/groceries/product/search/default.aspx?searchBox=bread&search=Search&N=4292930 325+0&=&Nao=40 <accessed 30/9/2016>

[12] *Consumers hunger for local produce after horsemeat-gate: Independent butchers are still feeding off the horsemeat scandal* – Anna White, Daily Telegraph http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/businessclub/10584806/Consumers-hunger-for-local-produce-after-horsemeat-gate.html <accessed 30/9/2016> see also *Horsemeat scandal triggers local produce boom* – New Forest National Park News http://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/news/article/554/horsemeat_scandal_triggers_local_produce_boom#.U2Eb 2YFdXTo <accessed 30/9/2016>

influential, but they are limited by what's on offer in the market place. Communication is therefore reduced to economic signals, it is de-socialised. Consumers have seemingly little option but to remain complicit in this mode of production, confined to the role of consumer and wage labourer, disconnected from the means of production or subsistence (Fraser, 2014, p. 57)

I have presented the progress of capital in the food system as progressive alienation, this describes an alienation in terms of the way in which production (and consumption) is structured but also an alienation from what Marx called *species being*, what we might think of as human nature. This latter dimension of alienation is significant – although the two aspects cannot be separated – in relation to well-being, because it is in alienation from *species being* that brings home the detrimental impact of production and consumption under capitalism. The process of industrialisation and mechanisation in the agri-food system is widely regarded as progress and whilst these processes have brought much higher yields and a greater range of foods at much lower prices, they have also brought costs. This is the two-fold nature of labour at work. Capital realizes use values in production because this enables exchange value and profit to be realised in the circulation of goods. What is good for capitalism is not necessarily good for human or planetary well-being 'good food is a bad commodity, but good commodities are often bad foods' (Caraher & Coveney, 2004, p. 593). The consequences of over eating these bad foods can be seen in the rising levels of obesity not just across the developed world but the whole globe (Pretty et al., 2015). These products make use of agricultural commodities that are produced with scant regard for the environment, farm land being exploited and degraded in order to realize short term gains in yields and therefore profits. Whilst I have positioned the logic of capital as dominant it is not all encompassing (Fraser, 2014; Holloway, 2012) and there are counter movements that can be observed.

The Fairtrade mark is now well-established signifier that a food product has been produced according to particular standards, intended to protect working conditions and the environment countering capital's tendency to degrade these in order to maximise profit. Whilst the Fairtrade movement aims

to secure fairer terms of trade and therefore working conditions for farmers it also intends to enable consumers to "to connect with the people who grow the produce that we all depend on." (Fairtrade Foundation 2016). This speaks to a broader desire to re-connect with the context of production that has also seen growing interest in local food. This is associated with 'alternative' forms of food a broad term which encompasses a broad swathe of initiatives that in some way position themselves against the dominant or conventional food system. There is now a significant literature around local and alternative food which has highlighted the potential of these counter tendencies to address the failings of a food system dominated by the logic of capital. However it has also underlined the contested nature of these terms and their vulnerability to reabsorption into the dominant food system. In the next section I turn my attention to this emergent and growing field of the literature and discuss its potential as a source of critique to the alienating tendencies of the dominant food system.

2.2 The emergence of local and alternative food: A critical response?

I have used the terms 'local' and 'alternative' to refer to the literature and will to continue to do so, but before discussing this literature in more depth it is necessary to observe some of the problems with this terminology. Local food's claimed alternative nature has meant that terms like alternative food system, network or initiative (AFS, AFN and AFIs) are often used interchangeably or alongside local food system. Unlike local, which signifies scale, alternative conveys an oppositional meaning, and in that sense more overtly frames a challenge to the conventional food system. Although features of a local food system may well be alternative, this is not necessarily the case. Whilst it may seem useful to identify countervailing responses to the conventional food system under the general heading of alternative, it might not really tell us that much.

"The main shortcoming of the AFN concept is that it has no clear normative content of its own, since it is ultimately defined in terms of its distinction from 'mainstream' food networks." (Renting, 2012, p. 291 see also Follett, 2008, p. 33).

Alternative then can prove a "slippery concept, resisting definition and shifting as soon as attempts are made to tie it down." (Holloway et al., 2007, p. 5). Local is no less concrete in its meaning, even if

it is less hollow than alternative, the nature of local is highly context dependent: "The local is not everywhere the same." (Allen, FitzSimmons, Goodman, & Warner, 2003, p. 63). The catch all nature of these terms means that one needs to be careful in employing them to describe particular aspects of the food system. Particularly if the intention is to explore critical articulations of local and alternative food which are distinct from more conventional forms they seek to critique. However, I do not wish to limit the following discussion of local or alternative food by specifying a particular definition, this would exclude a good deal of relevant material since the terms cover a multiplicity of meanings over which there is little agreement. Instead I want to reiterate that this lack of agreement over what we mean by local and or alternative is in part due to the difficulty of disentangling them from the dominant food system and further underlines the need to develop an approach that can better articulate their critical potential. I will adopt a similar approach to that taken by Feagan (2007) and use the terms as a "loose subsumption of alternative and oppositional food system ideas" (p.24). Therefore I apply the terms as they have been used previously, that is interchangeably and variably with different definitions, applying to a broad range of food projects, producers and networks which are in some way seen to break with the conventional food system and or operate on a small or local scale. In the following three sections I review the literature on alternative and local food in order to examine its critical potential, but also to draw out the implicit focus on well-being within the literature. In section 2.6 I discuss some of the more explicitly well-being focussed approaches to understanding local and alternative food and summarize the key themes in terms of well-being.

2.3 Re-localising production: Rural development and certification

One major strand of the local and alternative food literature has focused on its potential as a tool for rural development (Holloway et al., 2007, p. 4; DuPuis & Goodman, 2005; Goodman, 2003 see also Marsden & Smith, 2005; Renting, Marsden, & Banks, 2003 for examples). This approach has drawn attention to how local and alternative food systems can support rural livelihoods and benefit the environment by employing more sustainable production methods (Marsden & Smith, 2005; Murdoch et al., 2000). These studies tend to focus on the sphere of production and the benefits of shorter food

supply chains than those evident in the conventional food system. Shorter food supply chains can enable producers to capture more of the value of their product through direct sales and or by undertaking processing of food products themselves (Marsden & Smith, 2005; Renting et al., 2003). In this way local food systems can redistribute power to smaller producers, in contrast to the conventional food system where power is concentrated in the hands of a relatively small number of corporate actors (Halweil, 2002, p. 25). However one needs to be mindful of the significance of this. The proportion of people actually involved in agricultural production has shrunk from 22% to 1% in the UK over the last 170 years (ONS, 2011) not least as a result of increased mechanisation and the redistribution of global labour that has characterized the development of capital. Thus advancing the local food economy is not so much a challenge to the overriding financial calculus, as a protective response to its damaging impact.

> "They (Groups of organic farmers and food processors in Wales and Netherlands) are in general terms both a response to the recent deepening crises in conventional agricultural costs and prices, and at the same time, opportunistic and entrepreneurial attempts to capture more value-added from a larger segment of 'quality-seeking' customers." (Marsden & Smith, 2005, p. 448)

There is a question about the extent this can be regarded as alternative, since both problem and solution reside in conventional economic structures. A reliance on quality seeking consumers underscores the niche appeal of small scale, local production, and scaling up from these niche markets has been identified as a significant challenge for local food (Connelly, Markey, & Roseland, 2011, p. 317; Mount, 2011; Murdoch et al., 2000, p. 117). In attempting to respond to this challenge, initiatives must react to market pressures and therefore run the risk of watering down their 'alternative' values (Connelly et al., 2011; Mount, 2011) which can undermine their appeal and integrity as alternatives, as has happened with organic food production (Guthman, 2004; Marsden & Smith, 2005, p. 449; Sonnino & Marsden, 2006, p. 185). Brown and Getz identify a tendency to ignore issues of labour relations within organic food production (2008, p. 15; see also Myers & Sbicca, 2015), which begs the question as to how much of the added value captured through niche food products, finds its way to the UK's predominantly migrant agricultural workers (Fredenburgh, 2016).

A focus on quality and artisanal food production has suggested smaller scale production can be beneficial in terms of offering a less automated more creative craft labour process (Paxson, 2012; Sonnino & Marsden, 2006). This is in contrast to the experience of labour in the dominant food system, that has been characterized as unsafe and unrewarding throughout the value chain (Schlosser, 2002, 2013). The production of good quality food has been understood as contesting the industrial paradigm of dominant food system, where regulations prioritise safety and non-human, automated labour. This industrial model is juxtaposed with the craftsmanship, tacit experiential knowledge, and more creative and labour intensive work of artisanal production (Goodman, 2003; Sage et al., 2011). Certification schemes play a key role in communicating quality, valorising niche food products and differentiating the qualities of local or alternative as opposed to anonymous food commodities (Renting et al., 2003, p. 400). For example the French labelling system of appelation d'origin controlee, or AOC designates particular food products which are specific to a geographic region, for example Comte cheese; it also signifies a history of production and specific production practices, usually regarded as artisanal (Feagan, 2007, pp. 26–27; Sage et al., 2011; Trubek & Bowen, 2008)[13]. Whilst recognition of local foods in certification schemes has been seen as a helpful tool to support rural development, and facilitate transition to more localised production (Trubek & Bowen, 2008), the need for certification has arisen because of the distanciation of the food system (Allen et al., 2003; Trubek & Bowen, 2008, p. 24). Moreover this certification reinforces distanciation, by validating local production intended for global markets (Watts et al., 2005, p. 30). The way in which knowledge or quality is constructed in such schemes can actually exclude local actors from markets, as their place is taken by larger corporate entities (Fonte, 2008, pp. 214–5). The 'tyranny of sound science' in shaping regulations that validate particular forms of food restricts agency to 'experts' whilst other actors remain subject to the technical expectations that define such regimes of regulation (Sage et al., 2011). The desire to protect historic

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[13] Similarly the European Union systems of PDO, PGI and TSG (Protected Designation of Origin, Protected Geographical Indication and Traditional Specialty Guaranteed aim to denote food that has been produced to particular quality specifications and within a specific area see <http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/quality/schemes/index_en.htm> accessed 30/9/2016

or artisanal production methods is not necessarily motivated by the desire to realise a profit but it is hostage to it, since if these practices are to survive their products must command a premium price. If they cannot realise a sufficient exchange value, then they will not be sustained, by the conventional market at least.

Eden et al. (2008) note that the gap between producers and consumers is 'both cartographical and cognitive' (p. 1045). There is a gap in understanding between production and consumption as well as spatial proximity, this has been brought about not just by globalisation but by processes of industrialisation and mechanisation that have increased the complexity of food production (Murdoch & Miele, 1999). These processes have also removed people from employment in food production, 'de-humanizing' it, this starkly brought to life in the documentary film 'Our Daily Bread' (2005) which presents the world of high tech industrial production without comment. A "deficit in consumer knowledge" has created a "need for more specialized knowledge" amongst consumers (Meyer et al., 2012, p. 634). Labelling and certification systems, like the Fairtrade mark, attempt to address this deficit and enable consumers to make informed choices. However this 'knowledge fix' is problematic. As Eden et al. argue, assurance schemes wrap up information about food in a 'black box' which is not easily interpretable to consumers (2008, p.1054) thereby simply re-locating the knowledge problem rather than solving it. The task of distilling information into a form which consumers could readily interpret is not straightforward (Edwards-Jones et al., 2008) and relies on an assumption that consumers have the agency to act on the information, when in reality there are a host of other factors which constrain consumption choices (Eden, Bear, & Walker, 2008, p. 1047). In practice it is often easier for consumers to disregard responsibility and maintain ignorance regarding food choices over which they have limited knowledge and control (Eden et al., 2008, p. 1051; Ward & Meyer, 2009, p. 635). Consumers can therefore be vulnerable to the fetishization of products, even so called alternative ones, whereby the context of production is obscured, yet they present themselves as 'naturally embedded' in order to appeal to consumers (Morris & Kirwan, 2010). This presents a dilemma in that these alternative food products "…existence is made possible only by a wider market,

since they are either exported, or consumed by galloping gourmets: either the food or the consumer must travel." (Pratt, 2007, p. 292). The disconnection experienced by food consumers is expressive of the alienating structure of capitalism. Despite the everyday practice of food consumption and provisioning "an awareness of the origins of most foods is neither an everyday practice nor an important part of everyday knowledge" (Trubek & Bowen, 2008, p. 24).

Eden et al. also note that consumers do not just use labelling to sort good from bad food but also rely on other knowledge; physical characteristics, the retail context and their relationship to the retailer. Reliance on other situational or tactile knowledge can of course be misleading but can also 'empower' consumers rather than 'delegate' production of knowledge to bodies that standardize or certify food (Dubuisson-Quellier & Lamine, 2008). The authentication of particular qualities or characteristics of food through regulation and certification might be fraught with difficulties, but it does suggest increased reflexivity amongst consumers regarding their food choices (Eden et al., 2008; Veen, Derkzen, & Wiskerke, 2012, p. 369). The proliferation of labelling and certification schemes now at consumers' disposal can be seen as a positive sign of increased transparency and traceability in today's food system, but is also symbolic of the problems the systems has created. It indicates the alien nature of the products consumers are confronted with, the information conveyed in labelling may go some way to ameliorating this alienation, but they remain removed from them. Consumers will continue to be suspicious of certification schemes that are as abstract from them as the products they validate and open to appropriation by the conventional food system, which has eroded consumer trust in the first place.

2.4 Alternative consumption and the politics of local food

Consumer centred studies have uncovered a diverse range of factors that influence consumer choices, and a multiplicity of understandings in defining local and alternative food (Darby, Batte, Ernst, & Roe, 2008; Zepeda & Li, 2006). Despite a common view that local food is a middle class niche (Luetchford & Pratt, 2011, p. 89; Renting, 2012, p. 292), evidence suggests that demographic variables and socio-

economic status are not that important in defining consumer preferences (Blake et al., 2010; Zepeda & Li, 2006). Consumption choices are therefore determined by a range of factors, and can be profoundly politicized (Seyfang, 2008). Whilst consumers do not always act on their misgivings, they have been shown to express concern over the concentration of power in supermarkets and some desire to avoid them (Blake, Mellor, & Crane, 2010; Chambers, Lobb, Butler, Harvey, & Traill, 2007, p. 211). Responding to criticism of a production bias in the literature (Goodman & DuPuis, 2002; Watts et al., 2005, p. 23) consumer focussed studies have themselves tended toward a relatively limited approach, whereby consumers are mainly considered within the bounds of monetary exchange although wider influences on their 'buying behaviour' are considered. In emphasizing the agency of consumers there is a danger of overlooking the wider socio-economic framework, and the way in which consumption practices can, and do maintain this (Lockie, 2009). The consumers' ability to alter this situation is limited. However a narrow conceptualisation of consumers, whereby their act of consumption (political, ethical, sustainable or otherwise) via the market is considered their only means of influence, needs to be avoided (Blake et al., 2010). If an understanding of consumption is limited to purchases in the market than any desire to consume more ethically or sustainably must be translated into a financial signal and the value of these products expressed in monetary form (Lockie, 2009).

Departing from this narrow view Thompson and Coskuner-Balli (Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007; Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2008) use consumer theory to understand participation in Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) where the distinction between producer and consumer is blurred. When the consumer is not just confronted with, but involved in the world of production, the veil that typically obscures production is lifted. This frees the commodity from Marxian fetish, where value lies only in the end product not the processes which create it (Connelly et al., 2011, p. 314; Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007, p. 143).

> "…the re-enchantment engendered by the new means of consumption is both a therapeutic compensation for what rationalization has taken away and an ideological veil that prevents consumers from realizing that they are, in effect, mired in an iron cage of rationality that extends from their work life to their leisure time and that has transformed them into highly controlled

consumers (a disconcerting and disenchanting realization if there ever was one). In contrast, CSA is a market system that is designed to lift this ideological veil and to sensitize consumers to the social, environmental, cultural, health and psychological costs imposed by de-territorialized, McDonaldized and globalised food production." (Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007, p. 298)

In contrast, there are an array of studies examining consumers' willingness to pay for local or alternative food products (Chambers et al., 2007; Darby & Batte, 2006; Darby et al., 2008; Grebitus, Lusk, & Nayga, 2013; Zepeda & Li, 2006). These studies frame consumers as financial actors, contesting their identity as political actors or agents of change for a more ethical and ecological food system. Consumption though takes many forms, Soper points to the 'the minutiae of everyday practice' to locate alternative forms of consumption that are expressive of a desire to consume in the name of human need rather than the service of profit (Soper, 2008, p.576).

The role of individual actors as agents of change is more directly theorized in studies that take a social movements approach to understanding alternative and local food. Some of these approaches take issue with the global nature of the conventional system and provide powerful critiques (O'Hara & Stagl, 2001; Starr & Adams, 2003), advancing the local as an alternative (Ayres & Bosia, 2011). Other studies have focussed on the dynamics of food movements themselves (Wekerle, 2004) and their ability to affect wider change (Holloway et al., 2007). However, we need to be careful in referring to the local food movement as a single co-ordinated entity, this obscures the decidedly local nature of particular struggles and the specific contexts that give rise to them (Ayres & Bosia, 2011, p. 60; Wittman, 2009, p. 822). Sensitive to this point Holloway et al. (2007) advance a more contextual understanding of power relations in different food projects.

"Yet, despite our desire to emphasise difference and particularity, the question arises as to the possibility that some sort of broader political project might be established which seeks to change the overall food supply system for the better, without reverting to a story of alternatives positioned against a monolithic conventional food system." (Holloway et al., 2007, p. 15)

Whilst this quote emphasizes particularity it also suggests a desire to coalesce different elements of a wider local/alternative food movement under a common political goal. In order for these disparate elements to be brought together to achieve this goal they need to share common values. Given the

range of the terms local and alternative, involvement cannot be considered political by default. However, everyday practices can function as acts of resistance against the conventional food system by challenging established structures and practices, constituting "soft opposition" (Wekerle, 2004, pp. 379–80 see also Holloway, 2012). Given their seemingly ordinary nature it doesn't seem to make sense to understand these actions as part of a social movement, particularly if individuals themselves do not define them as political (Starr, 2010, p. 480; Veen et al., 2012); moreover, the broad range of projects subsumed within the local and/or alternative food movement are diverse and do not necessarily share the same set of values. There is then a need to develop an approach to understanding alternative and local food that is capable of differentiating between the diversity of forms, and underline their beneficial features.

2.5 Re-embedding the food system towards a civic agriculture

The political nature of alternative and local food has also been explored under the concept of civic agriculture which conceives of individuals not just as consumers or social movement actors, but citizens who can actualize a more civic food system. Lyson puts forward a broad definition setting out civic agriculture, in contrast to commodity agriculture, as an alternative system of food production which incorporates a range of social, environmental, economic and political dimensions which mark it out as different to the conventional model of agriculture (Lyson, 2004, p. 70-71; Lyson & Guptill, 2004). Other interpretations of the civic nature of alternative and local food systems have been less broad focussing instead on civic aspects of food production and distribution (Lamine & Darolt, 2012). Lamine and Darolt (2012) highlight how alternative food networks change the way in which food is produced and distributed and also redefine eating practices as well as developing regulations that support a different conception of food quality which encompasses social elements. They argue the collective or civic way in which these networks operate and create these changes is important in defining individuals as citizens (Lamine & Darolt, 2012, p. 391)

"From this perspective, food production and consumption practices are redefined as expressions of citizenship – that is, activities that speak not only of individual preferences, but also of moral rights and responsibilities" (Lamine & Darolt, 2012, p. 391)

Renting links 'civic food networks' to other key concepts in the discourse 'food democracy' and 'food sovereignty' (Renting, 2012). The two terms have different origins but both are representative of attempts to democratize the agri-food system and critique free market principles and policy that currently dominate it. What all of these terms or civic concepts have in common is an attempt to re-define consumers and producers as citizens who play an active role in shaping the food system, agency of citizens is key to these concepts, not just individual agency but collective agency:

"Citizen's actions related to food, from this perspective [civic food networks], should be defined as expressions of a common area of agency (shaped by consumers and producers) representing shared goals at community level and embodying a gradual shift from utilitarian–private visions to economic models based on solidarity and the defence of common goods." (Renting, 2012, p. 304)

In the above quote Renting alludes to a major question for proponents of a civic agri-food system; what are the common goods that food citizens are defending or aspiring to? As Delind argues production and consumption 'are not of themselves civic activities', they may be but only if the end and means by which this is achieved can be regarded as such. She is critical of the benevolent gloss that civic agriculture can put on economic relationships which remain essentially unchanged.

"The principal players (however friendly and personalized) are still producers and consumers; their basic identities are still framed by the economic or commercial transaction." (DeLind, 2002, p. 218)

DeLind also emphasizes the importance of 'place' to civic engagement, arguing that strong communities form not as a matter of choice, but as a 'function of necessity'. This acknowledges that for community to exist there needs to be space where people engage in shared experiences that connect them to one another in tangible, material ways and that commitment to community embodied in these spaces might not always be convenient or easy (DeLind, 2002, pp. 219–221). This can be realised in practices of food production and consumption, but only if they are reflective of the needs and desires of the community and in that sense civic. Renting (2012) observes how food citizenship is expressive of desires to connect with nature and other people, and can also facilitate a re-skilling of consumers enabling them to counteract the de-skilling tendencies of consumption of

processed convenience foods, which require little or no knowledge to consume (see also Blake et al., 2010, pp. 425–6; Lamine & Darolt, 2012, p. 390).

Clearly then civic approaches have highlighted aspects of food systems that might well be regarded as positive, but it is not clear that their civic-ness guarantees these features. There is also a tendency for civic to be used in the same way as local or alternative, without attention to the incongruous forms which are subsumed under that heading. The term civic applies to how democratic a system is – is it influenced by the people and does it operate in their interests – it does not necessarily provides us with an idea of what those interests ought to be. A well-being perspective can identify the features that proponents of a more civic food system might want to see. Civic approaches also rely on a generous view of individuals' ability to act as citizens; '…liberal and modern conceptions of citizenship often assume a standard of equality that does not exist in the current political economy' (Wittman, 2009, p. 811). Therefore if the civic approach is going to be meaningful then it needs to tackle uneven power relations in the food system head on and determine the nature of civic interests in the food system, leaving it unspecified means it's open to appropriation.

The way in which alternative food systems are embedded has led some to define them as civic (Lyson & Guptill, 2004, p. 62), but the concept of embeddedness itself has also been frequently used to understand the alternative socio-economic nature, or at least potential, of local food (Feagan & Morris, 2009; Hinrichs, 2000; Murdoch et al., 2000; Sage et al., 2011; Sage, 2003; Winter, 2003). Drawing on Granovetter (1985) and the earlier work of Karl Polanyi (1944), these approaches have acknowledged the socially constituted nature of economic structures and processes. The concept of social embeddedness is used to articulate how local food is embedded in a network of social relations, in contrast to the conventional food system (Hinrichs, 2000). In a study of two forms of direct agricultural market (CSA and farmers market), Hinrichs draws attention to the mixture of factors which shape exchanges at a farmers market, weight is placed on social ties as well as financial considerations. Farmers markets bring together producers and consumers in an interaction that is absent from

conventional retail structures, however they do not challenge the commodification of food (Hinrichs, 2000, p. 298). In contrast, CSA 'in certain ways defies the standard market model altogether' with a 'special emphasis on creating and building community around the interwoven issues of food, land and nature' (Hinrichs, 2000, p. 299). This points to how alternative food systems might be differently embedded although Hinrichs acknowledges that 'Embeddedness should not be seen simply as the friendly antithesis of the market' (2000, p. 296).

Murdoch et al. (2000) extend the notion of embeddedness beyond the social realm seeking to '...emphasize that nature is not a mere backdrop to economic action but is symmetrically entangled with the economic...' (Murdoch et al., 2000, p. 116). They also point out the two way nature of this embedding; the 'boomerang' quality of nature meaning that changes in the natural world can bounce back and in turn shape the economy (Murdoch et al., 2000, p. 110; Wittman, 2009, p. 821). The concept of embeddedness can bring to light the way in which aspects of the food system are embedded, but there is a danger that the way in which local food is embedded socially and ecologically can be overstated, whilst the conventional is portrayed as embedded in purely economic terms (Winter, 2003). Care also needs to be taken not to be overly deterministic in exaggerating the structural way in which aspects of the food system are embedded, and ignoring the role subjective factors play (Feagan & Morris, 2009). Embeddedness is also associated with Gidden's notion of disembeddedness, a feature of modern social life whereby our knowledge of things is far removed from them contributing to a distinct lack of trust and sense of agency (Meyer et al., 2012; Ward & Meyer, 2009). Readily apparent in the food system, this trust being further undermined by food scares like the horsemeat scandal and attempts to address such concerns through complex monitoring and quality assurance systems. However in reality what is at issue is not so much the disembedded nature of the food system but the very abstract way in which it is embedded; that is to say how it is embedded is not easily discernible. An understanding of how the food system is embedded in particular contexts underlines the importance of organisational form (Allen et al., 2003, p. 64). The way in which they structure the interactions that take place within it, between producers, consumers and intermediaries

and how they mediate the relationship between spaces of production and consumption. What is lacking is a framework to evaluate the nature of embeddedness in terms of its impact on well-being.

2.6 Food and well-being: Defining a Marxian approach

Some studies have focussed on health and well-being by demonstrating a link between a healthier diet and a more localised food system, (Bimbo, Viscecchia, & Nardone, 2012; Pascucci, Cicatiello, & Franco, 2011), noting how participation in community food enterprises can encourage the consumption of freshly prepared food and vegetables is liable to increase (Flora & Bregendahl, 2012, p. 343; Pascucci et al., 2011; Perez, Allen, & Brown, 2003, p. 3). The concept of 'Food Deserts' has been used to examine the accessibility of nutritious food. Although understandings of the term vary (Walker, Keane, & Burke, 2010), it is typically understood to refer to an area (usually urban) where there is a paucity of fresh food outlets (Russell & Heidkamp, 2011, p. 1198). Consequently, residents have limited access to fresh fruit and vegetables (particularly if transport options are limited) and must instead rely on convenience stores and fast food outlets where the nutritional quality of food tends to be poorer. Paradoxically the modern phenomenon of supermarkets which dominate food retail can be seen as both cause and potential solution to food deserts (Guy, Clarke, & Eyre, 2004; Russell & Heidkamp, 2011; Walker et al., 2010). Community food projects have been seen as another way to address food desserts (Figueroa, 2013), underpinned by the belief they can help people access a more nutritious diet. However, the dimensions of health and well-being are much broader than just diet. Figueroa's (2013) study of a project initiated in response to a food desert also underlines how the project performs a variety of social functions. Coveney (2000) also makes the case for much more attention to how social organisation relates to health in food systems, highlighting how local and community food systems can potentially foster social cohesion, trust and co-operation. A narrow focus on health can be counterproductive, supporting the manipulation and adulteration of food stuffs in order for them to be made more nutritious; whilst furthering the social and biological gap between consumers and their diet (Dowler, Kneafsey, Cox, & Holloway, 2009, p. 201). In general, health

focussed studies tend to centre either on the impact of alternative and local food on diet (Alaimo, Packnett, Miles, & Kruger, 2008; Bimbo et al., 2012; Kingsley et al., 2009; Perez et al., 2003) or on physical health through the exercise and physical activity involved in gardening and food growing (Brown & Jameton, 2012; Chen, 2013; Kingsley et al., 2009; van den Berg, van Winsum-Westra, de Vries, & van Dillen, 2010). The ways in which alternative and local food systems can benefit health is important but a narrow focus on health would overlook other ways in which they are beneficial for well-being.

Earlier I argued that alienation is key to understanding the way in which the food system is detrimental to well-being. I highlighted some key dimensions that Marx identifies in terms of alienation and its impact on well-being: Alienation from nature, social alienation and alienation from labour and its product. Marx's concept of *species being* or human nature is central to defining the conditions of capitalism – in the food system or elsewhere – as alienating. Although the account of human nature described by Marx in the *Manuscripts* is not extensive (Dickens, 2009, p. 108; Sayers, 2011, p. 34), it is clear that he considered humans to be inherently social and connected with extra-human nature, and that through productive life activity – or labour – they are able to consciously realise human needs. I have also highlighted how well-being has been overlooked as a conceptual approach for understanding the contribution of local and alternative food. Yet, there are several themes which cut across the literature underpinning the arguments for local and alternative food which are relevant to understanding how they contribute to well-being and overlap with the dimensions of alienation described in section 2.1 and the introductory chapter.

Agency is a key dimension, this is prevalent in development approaches that focus on the agency of producers in shaping the development of rural economies in a way that reclaims some of the balance of power and value from corporate agriculture in shorter food supply chains (Kneafsey et al., 2013; Renting et al., 2003). Consumer agency is also a major focus this goes beyond a narrow economic perspective, where signals sent through the market via buying choices is the extent of agency. Rather

consumers can be active in shaping the meaning of alternative and local food, and defining the consumption choices on offer to them (Blake et al., 2010; Dubuisson-Quellier & Lamine, 2008). Knowledge plays a key supporting role in defining the extent of consumers' agency (Renting, 2012, p. 301), the various certification schemes designed to inform consumers of the various qualities of products attest to this. However, consumers typically remain removed from these schemas and much further from the world of food production so there are limitations to the extent that this can address the disconnection (Kneafsey et al., 2008) actualized in the dominant food system and restore agency. The ability of actors to shape the food system beyond their role as producers or consumers has been highlighted by social movement approaches. Similarly a civic understanding of alternative and local food paint individuals as citizens, rather than just producers or consumers, to argue for a democratically determined food system in the collective interest. All of these interpretations of local and alternative food point to the significance of agency and this is no less so in well-being (Gasper, 2007, 35).

The organisation of production is critical in terms of how agency is realised, this is not just the agency of producers but the agency of individual workers. These two terms could be taken mean the same thing and there is often an inattention to the distinction between them in food studies. Cramer et al. point out that the Fairtrade premium has not reached the low paid wage labourers engaged by Fairtrade producers, the workforce being treated as a homogenous mass, when in reality the lowest paid have not benefitted (Cramer, Johnston, Oya, & Sender, 2014). Despite its ambitions the Fairtrade movement has been criticised for an inattention to social issues particularly labour (Terstappen, Hanson, & McLaughlin, 2013). The lack of focus on labour is not restricted to the Fairtrade movement though. The wider local and alternative food movement has been subject to the same critique:

"By eschewing definitions of definitions of social justice based on class or labor relations (Allen et al. 2003; Guthman 2004), the sustainable and organic agriculture communities have historically failed to address farm worker issues…"(Brown & Getz, 2008, p. 15; see also Besky & Brown, 2015).

Organisational studies have highlighted the impoverished, alienated experience of work under capitalism (Shantz, Alfes, & Truss, 2014) often drawing on Braverman's Labour Process Theory (Braverman, 1974; Willmott, 1997). Although studies in the food system have brought a capitalist understanding of labour to bear there has been scant attention in the alternative and local food literature to the experience of labour. In a study of grape production Bonanno & Barbosa highlight the control of labour through its specialization due to stringent quality guidelines for food products and the negative impact on workers: "…certification requirements generate production processes in which laborers work longer for less pay, perform more sophisticated tasks, are employed mostly through temporary contracts, and experience new and more advanced forms of control." (Bonanno & Barbosa, 2011, p. 50; see also Holmes, 2013). The experience of work in the food system appears to be subject to the same forces of capital at work more generally that characterize jobs as low quality and lacking in autonomy (Vidal, 2013). The abstract nature of production makes labour an easy target for producers wishing to reduce costs, and although alternative and local food have sought to address this abstraction few studies have focussed on the labour process. Schoneboom's (2013) study of the labour process at allotments is a rare example of an examination of the work involved in food growing when it isn't structured by the wage relation. This provides some insight into how involvement in food growing might provide opportunities for tangible, self-directed fulfilling *labour* in a way paid work might not: "As a form of unwaged, eco-friendly production and consumption, the allotment suggests possibilities for a society looks beyond the wage labour/consumption binary to more sustainable that forms of social interaction." (Schoneboom & May, 2013, p. 148).

Social relationships are another key theme traversing the literature. This is clearly articulated in approaches that have sought to emphasize the positive way in which local and alternative food are socially embedded. This is highlighted by Murdoch et al. (2000) who highlight the significance of trust and personal relationships and in a network of small scale producers, this is contrasted with the de-socialized food chains of the conventional food system. The bridging of relationships between producers and consumers via direct sales such as farmers markets or box schemes are also held up as

unique features of alternative and local food, which benefit both parties (Brown & Miller, 2008; Lyson, 1995). Civic agriculture also argues for the grounding of food production in *community,* whereby activities constituted by 'community food systems' can form part of the social fabric. Attention to social processes and structures also highlights the role of organisational form in shaping the quality and context of social interaction within different aspects of the food system (Hinrichs, 2000, 2012).

The literature does not only speak to a desire to re-embed the food system in more meaningful social relationships, but also a desire to re-connect it with a sense of place. Much of the literature is dedicated to the environmental credentials of local and alternative food systems, as compared to the detrimental impact of conventional production. Pretty et al. (2005) estimated externalised[14] environmental costs for transport of food and agricultural produce in the UK at approximately £2.35 billion. The smaller ecological impact of local food systems is not simply a consequence of their being grounded in a particular place, this is true of all forms of food production to some extent. Rather this is a consequence of the entwining of social and ecological relationships as expressed by the concept of place (DeLind, 2002; Devine-Wright, 2013; Urquhart & Acott, 2013). It is this enmeshing which fosters a more ecologically responsible, sustainable mode of production, the damaging effects of production are less prone to be externalised because they feedback into the system. In the same way that consumers are driven by a desire to reconnect socially, via alternative food, demand for local and alternative food also indicates a desire to re-connect to nature (Dowler et al., 2009). Whilst concerns about the environment play an important role in shaping consumer motivations the desire to re-connect through food suggests a more visceral yearning. The dominant agri-food system distances people from the natural context that food production depends upon, this feeds into the tendency of the system to undermine its own conditions of production and blind people to it but it also deprives people of a meaningful *relationship with nature,* which can be highly beneficial for well-being (Pretty, 2007, Chapter 12). Interaction with the natural environment through involvement in food growing and

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[14] Externalised costs or Externalities arise from the use of natural resources, as inputs or pollution sinks, for example, the cost of which is not reflected in prices paid by consumers or producers (J.N. Pretty et al., 2000).

gardening has been seen as a key contribution to this damaging consequence of modern life (J. Pretty, 2002).

An examination of the literature underlines the dialectical relationship between the dominant food system and the local and the alternative. Whilst the failings of the food system are readily apparent, we need to be wary of seeing these opposing schemas as a dichotomy, since neither can be considered in absolute terms (Campbell, 2001; Donald et al., 2010; Follett, 2008; Hinrichs, 2000; Morgan et al., 2006). Although alternative, localised food systems can translate into more ecologically and socially responsible modes of production they do not necessarily guarantee it. They are also vulnerable to the forces of the market that have created the problems of the global food system which can undermine responsible social and ecological ambitions, despite good intentions (Campbell, 2001; Connelly et al., 2011; Ilbery & Maye, 2005). A range of empirical and theoretical approaches have been deployed to understand alternative and local food (Carolan, 2011, Chapter 1; R. Feagan, 2007; Sonnino & Marsden, 2006, p. 185). Yet, whilst interest and research on alternative and local food is defined by its opposition to the dominant food system differentiating these critical forms materially and theoretically has proved difficult. However, there remains a view that there is something better about local and alternative food that it speaks of a more positive vision of the food system.

The concept of alienation can be helpful in both respects. It can form the basis of a Marxist approach to well-being therein retaining a critical understanding of the dominant food system. In defining the structure of production under capital as damaging to human nature, we can infer that those spaces where labour is not governed by the logic of capital might offer a potential vision of life activity which is guided by use value, by a desire to meet human need. If we are to explore these spaces further then we must turn our attention to forms of local and alternative food that do not operate according to the logic, and therefore the structure of capitalism. This establishes the organisational of labour and therefore organisational form of local and alternative food as critically important. Resistance to the dominant food system can be found in everyday life, where there exists labour unstructured by

particular organisational form that defies the alienating structures of the mainstream. Consider the act of allotment gardening or blackberry picking, not explicitly subversive and the latter most likely a common childhood experience for many, but could this seemingly innocuous pastime hint at forms of labour and production guided by a different logic. The conceptualization of alienation and the literature on alternative and local food both suggest key dimensions in respect of well-being. However, what the literature also emphasizes is the need to look beyond the alienating structures and experiences of capitalism to de-alienated spaces in order to explore how well-being might be constituted. Since it is the organisation of production and consumption that defines our relationship with nature and one another, as well as the ways in which we can express agency and clearly the experience of labour. In the next section I examine forms of alternative and local food that depart from the dominant food system in such a way and which are the focus of this research.

2.7 Community Food Organisations as critical spaces for constructing well-being

As already noted there are a huge range of organisational forms subsumed under the heading of local and alternative food. The actions of buying a Fairtrade chocolate bar or local apples from a supermarket, farm shop, or farmers market, differ quite markedly from each other and from spending a few hours volunteering at a community garden and taking home some food in return. This study focuses on some of the more critical articulations of alternative and local food that I define as 'community food organisations' (CFOs). In doing so it departs from the contested and contestable nature of the terms local and alternative. I define community food organisations as initiatives which involve local people in the production of food for consumption within that community (typically by those involved in production). They act as an alternative source of food to conventional forms of provision, although I will argue their contribution goes much beyond this. The term community abounds in the alternative and local food literature, often being used to describe particular projects or initiatives but occasionally as a signifier for an alternative 'community food system' (Born & Purcell, 2006, p. 199; Feenstra, 2002; Gillespie & Smith, 2008; O'Kane, 2012). This represents a unification of

local and alternative in the sense that community is by definition bounded in some sense and suggests an alternative ethos to the logic which defines the predominant food system. Of course communities might not be exclusively local but this tends to apply in the case of food production for obvious reasons, although issues with definition still apply. One could also argue that networks of Fairtrade producers and consumers might be considered an alternative yet global type of community food organisation. However, this wouldn't fit the definition I gave above, since production and consumption remain separate, this underlines the need to be clear in our interpretations of these terms and particular articulations of them, whilst also acknowledging that no term is universal or uncontested in its meaning. However, the distinctive feature of community under this definition is not that it is local or alternative, but that it is a community organised by the nature of food production; the way in which production and consumption is brought together defines the community. In this way they can address alienation in the food system, bringing the consumer into production and engaging them in labour which is not determined by the need to realise exchange value, but by a communal need to realise use value in the food produced. In the discussion that follows I consider the specific literature on the two types of CFOs which this study focusses on: Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) and Community Gardens (CGs).

There are a whole range of initiatives captured under the terms community supported agriculture and community garden, although diverse they tend to share an organisational logic if not specific form. Community supported agriculture or CSA is a model of food production whereby members of a CSA scheme pay in advance for a 'share' of produce, usually a season or year, which is typically delivered in the form of a weekly vegetable box (Schnell, 2013). Central to the organisational logic of CSA is that the consumer and producer share the risks and rewards of food production (Bougherara, Grolleau, & Mzoughi, 2009, p. 1490; Hinrichs, 2000, p. 299), so if the season is good members will receive bumper crops, if it is poor they receive less. The CSA benefits the producer by guaranteeing a market for their crop, thereby mitigating against the uncertainties of agricultural production. Members can be rewarded in good harvest years but typically are motivated by other reasons, such as the desire to get

closer to the production of their food, guaranteed access to healthy, responsibly produced food and supporting local farmers (Bougherara et al., 2009). One important distinction to make between types of CSA or types of member within CSA is those who simply pay for their CSA share and those who pay in part by working on the CSA farm – a distributive share versus a working share (Chen, 2013). I return to this distinction below, since it is significant in shaping the experience of CSA and its benefits for participants, and was a key consideration in determining the selection of research sites in this study.

Community gardens (CGs) are if anything more diverse than CSAs. The reasons for their origination are myriad; healthy eating, physical exercise, urban regeneration, food security, community renewal or empowerment, reconnection with food and nature, education and promotion of skills (Dowler et al., 2009; Firth, Maye, & Pearson, 2011; McClintock, 2014; Milbourne, 2012; Pudup, 2008). The form they take is varied, but typically they constitute a space, often but not always in an urban area, where an area of land is given over to gardening, invariably including the production of food which is accessible to the public, who are encouraged to become involved in this space. Within this broad definition there is a good deal of variation in terms of what is meant by involvement, how accessible these spaces are and to who, and the particular organisational form they take (Firth et al., 2011; Pudup, 2008). Central then to idea of community gardening is involving the local community in production of that gardening space, albeit the precise form and motivations vary as do the benefits.

Recent years have seen community supported agriculture and community gardens flourish (Firth et al., 2011; Flora & Bregendahl, 2012). Unlike CSA, community gardens have been more explicitly theorised as 'sites for social integration' (Renting, 2012, p. 301). This is unsurprising since they are often established with this goal in mind and are usually explicitly aimed at improving the well-being of a particular community. For this reason much more research has taken place looking at the well-being benefits of community gardens. The benefits they offer are diverse and although several studies have explored these (Alaimo et al., 2008; Armstrong, 2000; Kingsley et al., 2009) there has been little attempt to systematically evaluate these spaces. The same is true of CSAs, whilst some studies have

sought to understand the experience and benefits of CSA (Brown & Miller, 2008; Chen, 2013; DeLind, 1999; Perez et al., 2003), few have sought to develop a framework constituted around well-being to evaluate them. Flora & Bregendahl's 2012 study comes closest to this in using a community capitals framework to understand CSAs, but this is a rare exception (see also Soil Association, 2011).

Studies looking specifically at CSAs have often sought to understand the motivations of people involved (Bougherara et al., 2009; O'Hara & Stagl, 2001) and whilst some have described the experience of participation few have sought to understand participants perceptions of the value of CSA (Chen, 2013). Moreover there has been very little attention to the distinction between different models of CSA. Studies often focus on just one CSA or a small handful of initiatives, whereby the features of each are described but there is little analysis of different institutional forms and the implications of this. The 2011 report from the Soil Association on the impact of CSA is a case in point, whilst the report highlights some common benefits including well-being in general, it doesn't differentiate between the projects that are reviewed. Many studies have focussed on CSAs that offer exclusively or predominantly distributive shares (for example, Bougherara et al., 2009; Brown & Miller, 2008; Hayden & Buck, 2012; Perez et al., 2003) where CSA membership is defined predominantly by consumption and members are not significantly involved in the production of their food. The model of CSA understood in this way is not that distinct from a consumer sourcing their food from ethical and ecological producers through retail outlets. Although the CSA model does require a commitment on the part of the consumer for at least a growing season, so does involve a deeper relationship than fleeting economic exchanges typical of the market. It is unsurprising that these studies have tended to emphasize consumer benefits; access to food that is considered healthier and fresher, more responsibly produced. The closing of the gap between producer and consumer is key in establishing these benefits because it gives genuine credence to products' claims of these qualities (Bougherara et al., 2009).

The social benefits of CSA participation have been identified but this is less pronounced than in the case of literature on community gardens. Many studies of CSAs, particularly in North America, focus on distributive share CSA models where any social interaction tends to take place sporadically around distribution points, social events or occasional work days at the CSA farm. In the North American context CSAs seem to have undergone somewhat of a de-socialisation from the early ideals of agricultural production embedded in and undertaken in collaboration with the community (Feagan & Henderson, 2009; Lang, 2010). However some studies have focussed on CSAs where participation in food growing is more overt and have gone beyond uncovering the longing for a sense of community to establish that CSA goes some way to meeting this desire (Schnell, 2013). Where CSA members do get involved in production, and even in consumption, the sensory and material re-connection with food is important in defining a more authentic experience that re-establishes some agency over food choices (Hayden & Buck, 2012; Hayes-Conroy, 2010; Schnell, 2013). Chen's (2013) study which looks specifically at the experience of a 'working share' study underlines the emotional and social value of participation but also the health value, educational value and the quality of the food itself. In an important departure Chen seeks to understand the perceived value of CSA looking specifically at the value of a 'working share' as opposed to a 'distributive share' whereby CSA members simply receive a food share rather than being involved in producing it.

The theoretical framework adopted by Chen in understanding the value of participating in the CSA seems to be somewhat at odds with the empirical focus. The starting point and key organising concept of perceived value originates in consumer literature that has sought to understand how to market products to consumers according to their perception of value in them (see Boksberger & Melsen, 2011 for a review). However the findings are consistent with the local and alternative food literature discussed earlier, in that social connections and interactions arising from participation in CSA are particularly important in defining the perceived value. Connection with the environment via participation supports a perception amongst members of the educational value for children. People's experience of emotional value, as well as health value through exposure to green space and 'fresh air'

is also identified (Chen, 2013). New experiences and opportunities to learn - conceived of as 'epistemic value' – enable members to retake some control of food production (and therefore consumption) suggesting enhanced agency. Chen's study of CSA is a significant but isolated example of the range of benefits it offers and how these are actualized but the participants remain conceptualized as consumers despite their role as producer being critical in shaping these benefits. This thesis aims to go beyond the limitations of existing case studies which simply seek to describe the experience of CSA, typically in a partial (Hayden & Buck, 2012) or narrow (Schnell, 2013) way.

Like CSAs the term community garden (CG) covers a range of organisational forms (Firth et al., 2011, p. 556) but they share an important characteristic with CSA in that they can bring the consumer into the world of production. CGs have been positioned as a potential response to the problem of food deserts by improving access to nutritious fresh food thereby enhancing the 'food security' of urban dwellers in deprived neighbourhoods (Alaimo et al., 2008; Corrigan, 2011). For this reason several studies have sought to underline the contribution CGs can make to public health through diet (for example, Alaimo et al., 2008; Armstrong, 2000) but have also emphasized a range of other benefits, such as physical exercise, connection to nature, social capital, mental health (see also, Firth et al., 2011; Glover, 2004; Kingsley et al., 2009; Milbourne, 2012; Teig et al., 2009) The multiple ways in which community gardens can be beneficial for health and well-being has therefore been cited as a distinctive advantage, in comparison to other public health interventions that tend to have a narrower focus (Armstrong, 2000). For these reasons more research has taken place looking at the well-being benefits of community gardens. However, well-being itself remains under-theorised in these studies.

The circumstances in which community gardens originate are diverse and not all are created with the aim of improving well-being, many tend to arise in vacant urban plots as part of a process of community renewal in a context where access to land is limited (Armstrong, 2000, p. 322). Unsurprisingly then the analytical focus on community gardens has been on the community aspect; that is the way in which contribute to rebuilding community and enhancing 'social capital' (Firth et al.,

2011; Glover, 2004) or enhancing collective efficacy (Teig et al., 2009) in shaping the community. There

is however a good deal of overlap here with the features already mentioned as salient to well-being

in the context of local and alternative food. Clearly the social relationships and interaction described

by the notion of social capital speak to the idea of social connectedness already referred to. The

ecological aspect of community is to some extent downplayed by analyses that focus on social aspects

of community gardens, although various authors point to the key role that geographical location plays

in defining the impact and the nature of CGs (Armstrong, 2000; Firth et al., 2011). An opportunity to

commune with nature in some way via CGs is frequently reported as a benefit. Armstrong (2000) notes

this was particularly important in gardens in an urban context. Moreover it is the connection with a

specific place that is realised through connections that are both social and material in that they are

constituted by an interaction with the bounded geographical environment and people within that:

> "…the garden environment promotes more than social connection, trust, and reciprocal
> relationships—it provides something to which they can belong." (Teig et al., 2009, p. 1119)

The sense of place or belonging that contributes to the collective efficacy that Teig et al. identify

overlaps with what I earlier referred to as agency, this is also reflected in other studies of community

gardens which describe how participants experience a sense of achievement or purpose (Kingsley et

al., 2009). Whilst the benefits of community gardens have been identified, there have been no real

attempts to capture these in a well-being framework and the 'intervening mechanisms' by which these

benefits arise are not well understood or articulated (Teig et al., 2009, p. 1116). There has also been

some critique of community gardens as spaces of neoliberal[15] subjectivity and governmentality 'spaces

in which gardening puts individuals in charge of their own adjustment(s) to economic restructuring

and social dislocation' (Pudup, 2008; P. 1228, see also Harris, 2008; Potter & Westall, 2013). This is

part of the wider critique of alternative and local food that suggests its 'opposition to

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[15] Neoliberalism is defined by Harvey as "a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade." (Harvey quoted in Harris, 2009, p. 57). The neoliberal subject/ivity is the individual embodiment of this theory (see Türken, Nafstad, Blakar, & Roen, 2015 for a more detailed discussion and analysis)

neoliberalizations of the food and agricultural sectors seem to produce and reproduce neoliberal forms, spaces of governance, and mentalities.' (Guthman, 2008, p. 1171). The previous section which reviewed the literature on alternative and local food suggests there are good reasons to be cautious about claims of alterity but this needn't mean we should reject the potential for resistance to the dominant outright. Echoing Harris who argues this scepticism goes too far, we need to read for difference rather than just dominance (2008; P.56). As McClintock observes in relation to urban agriculture the reality is much more complex:

> "…urban agriculture, in its many forms, is not radical or neoliberal, but may exemplify both a form of actually existing neo-liberalism and a simultaneous radical counter-movement arising in dialectical tension." (McClintock, 2014; P. 148)

This suggests a need to bring together critique at the same time as drawing out the potential alternative vision that such spaces can offer. Marx's concept of alienation enables us to do this, the critique it expresses of the detrimental impact of the structures of production and consumption according to capital is also suggestive of an alternative mode of production guided by an interest in meeting human need or well-being. This study makes a key contribution in terms of understanding how both CG and CSA give rise to well-being in creating alternative spaces of production, thereby also functioning as critique. Well-being is the positive reflection of the critique underpinned by alienation. In the next section I dedicate some space to considering the resurgent discourse of well-being and examining its limitations.

2.8 Well-being, a complicit or critical concept

> "Politically, well-being gives voice to desires for an alternative, a new moral economy, a counterweight to the excesses of capitalism…Paradoxically perhaps, the stress on personal experience also fits well with the individualist ideologies of late capitalism and their faith in the pursuit of happiness through choice in consumption." (White & Blackmore, 2015, pp. 4–5)

I have argued that the commodification of food has been integral to the expansion and accumulation of capital which has overwhelmingly shaped the development of the food system and that this process has been damaging in a number of ways. In this section I want to expand on the notion of well-being and consider how this is relevant to this critique and addressing it. Well-being has long been of interest

to social scientists, philosophers and society in general; Aristotle's concept of human flourishing and the good life is a particularly notable example that continues to influence work on well-being today (Nussbaum, 2000). Until recently economic well-being had assumed primacy as a measure of progress, but the emergence of a rejuvenated discourse around well-being has sought to challenge this. This forms the basis of this section in which I argue that interest in well-being has been sparked by the failings of the neoliberal project in much the same way that similar critique in the context of the food system has given rise to an interest in alternative and local food. I also acknowledge there are well-founded critiques of this discourse on well-being and long established issues of definition and application which need to be considered.

In some regards the resurgent interest in well-being can be seen as a positive signal that the failures of capitalism are being taken more seriously. However, well-being is heterogeneous in its nature and can be mobilized in many ways:

> "The diversity, volume and velocity of increase in references to well-being suggest a cultural tide that sweeps together a range of different interests and agendas." (White & Blackmore, 2015, p. 4)

Layard's happiness science is one such agenda, arguably this and the associated, and expanding, field of positive psychology (White, 2015) are the dominant paradigm in the current discourse of well-being (Atkinson, 2013). It would be unfair to suggest that the account of happiness that economists like Layard subscribe to is simplistically hedonistic, positive psychology allows for a good deal more components of happiness than this (Miller, 2008). However the return to utilitarian principles, should give us cause for concern since this incorporates the limitations of this view, which requires adjustment rather than wholesale rejection:

"The challenge to public economics is to incorporate the findings of modern psychology while retaining the rigour of the cost-benefit framework which is the strength and glory of our subject" (Layard, 2006, p. 1).

Miller is highly critical of the assumptions that he argues underpin positive psychology, asserting that separation of psychological traits into positive and negative is misguided and the conception of people as goal orientated beings who can successfully manage their personality to enhance their happiness

is simplistic and inaccurate (Miller, 2008). Babara Ehrenreich (2010) goes much further in her scathing critique of positive psychology which she argues aligns with neoliberal values to damaging effect. The responsibility of achieving well-being rests with the individual who is expected to correct the deficiencies in their state of well-being by being more 'positive' (Atkinson, 2013; Sointu, 2005). Martin Seligman, probably the most prominent academic in the positive psychology field, is singled out by Ehrenreich (2010, chap. 6) for particular criticism. Although he has modified his original position somewhat, perhaps in response to such criticisms (Forgeard, Jayawickreme, Kern, & Seligman, 2011, pp. 96–7), it remains individualistic, if less simplistic (White & Blackmore, 2015, Chapter 1). Ehrenreich also argues that positive thinking contributed to the financial collapse of 2008, via the refusal of financial actors to interpret warning signs negatively and consumers' positive sense of entitlement over material goods encouraging a spending spree they couldn't underwrite.

Regardless of how seriously you take Ehrenreich's claims, it seems clear that accounts of well-being do not necessarily represent a challenge to neoliberal economics. Careful thought needs to be given to the way in which well-being is defined and understood as well as the purpose it serves in particular contexts. Accounts of well-being that draw on positive psychology to expound a 'science of happiness' have certainly had a significant impact in policy circles, particularly within the UK (Sointu, 2005; Stewart, 2014; White & Blackmore, 2015). The return to attempts to measure happiness as opposed to proxies like income should be viewed as progress as even vehement critics like Ehrenreich testify (p.2 2009). However, whilst they shift the focus of measurement from means to ends they also bring with them much of the theoretical baggage and methodological instruments that have hampered resource based approaches. The return to measuring the end in the form of subjective well-being has counterbalanced the preoccupation with income-based measures but ultimately is reductionist. There is an assumption that well-being can be reduced to a single measureable variable this suggests a view of happiness as one-dimensional and aggregative (Skidelsky & Skidelsky, 2012, pp. 113–23). This tells us little about the qualitative differences that might influence our well-being. Ironically the re-focus on ends instead of means can tell us little of how people achieve different levels of well-being and it

also overlooks individual interpretations of what well-being means. It leaves defining what well-being is and the extent to which they are achieving it up to the individual, ignoring the way in which structural factors produce inequalities of well-being.

There are a host of methodological issues that should also make us cautious of accepting the evidence about subjective well-being that happiness economics relies on (DeBow & Lee, 2006). Typically happiness surveys rely on self-reported or subjective well-being, they are a snapshot in time and can be difficult to compare between countries due to different cultural understandings of what is meant by happiness (Skidelsky & Skidelsky, 2012, p. 102-13). Although statistical approaches can be adopted that allow us to control for some of these issues the data captured in quantitative well-being surveys is far from perfect (Becchetti & Pelloni, 2013). This kind of measurement is also ignorant to the issue of adaptation, whereby individuals become used to their particular living circumstances and therefore adapt by adjusting their well-being aspirations. The tendency to revise down expectations in this way can be particularly detrimental on the persistently deprived (Cohen, 1993, p. 17). Haybron (2008, Chapter 10) provides a range of empirical evidence that questions the accuracy of self-reported measures of happiness and also argues that we can be poor judges of our own happiness. This need not mean we can learn nothing about happiness from self-reported information simply that asking people how happy they are directly, is of limited value. Although scholars of happiness may accept that a causal relationship between income and happiness is not a foregone conclusion, they are still wedded to utilitarian framework which conceptualises happiness far too narrowly and primarily as an individual pursuit (Atkinson, 2013): "To go from the pursuit of growth to the pursuit of happiness is to turn from one false idol to another." (Skidelsky & Skidelsky, p. 123).

2.9 Conclusion

I have drawn on Marx's concept of alienation to underline how development of the food system has been shaped by the need to realise profit at the cost of both human and environmental well-being.

Exploring the growing discourse on alternative and local food illustrates that whilst it is grounded in resistance to the dominant capitalist food system it has in theory and practice been difficult to break free from it. However, this literature has made valuable contributions and points to a range of ways in which alternative and local food might benefit well-being. The themes that I drew out from the literature significantly overlap with the view of human well-being that is reflected in Marx's concept of alienation. Combining these insights suggests that the way in which alternative and local food is socially and naturally or materially embedded is important for well-being. Also underlined is the importance of organisational form or structure and the way that this defines the experience of production and consumption. The way in which production and consumption is organised defines labour, agency and control in the food system. Using alienation as a critical lens highlights the need to turn our attention to the values which underpin the structures of production and consumption. Not only can this sharpen our critique but it can also form the basis of an understanding of critical forms of alternative food guided by alternative values. The critical power of alienation as a concept is the way that it highlights that capitalism not only alienates us structurally in the way production is organised but spiritually also. Growing interest in well-being is reflective of discontent with the prevailing rationale of capitalism, but we must be wary of claims that this well-being focus represents a genuine shift. To understand how the critical tendencies articulated in forms of alternative and local food might constitute a positive vision we need to understand how they construct well-being as opposed to the narrow instrumental focus on profit that dominates the food system, this requires a Marxian approach to well-being. In next chapter I take this theoretical position forward and set out the methodological approach I take to studying CFOs.

Chapter 3 – Researching the impact of community food organisations on well-being

Introduction

In the last chapter I reviewed the literature on local and alternative food and explored the impact and processes of alienation in the food system. Using alienation to critically analyse the food system points to the importance of the organisation of production and consumption in the dominant food system as damaging to well-being. As alternative spaces of production CFOs are an important site of research and discussion of them revealed a dearth of studies describing the lived experience of CFOs. Also identified was a lack of theoretical and empirical approaches to local and alternative food which examine them from a well-being perspective. This gap is significant, particularly when we consider the key themes I identified in the literature which underline a common assumption, that local and alternative food are beneficial in a range of ways. In this chapter I set out the methodological approach which follows the theoretical position I outlined in the last chapter. The first section outlines the ontological and epistemological standpoint from which the research is approached, specifying a Marxist approach to well-being. Section 3.2 specifies the research design and main question the research addresses: *How can the construction of well-being in CFOs be understood to address alienation in the food system?* It also details the sub-questions that follow from this. Section 3.3 outlines the selection of the research sites and how they were accessed, the following section

describes the specific methods used to generate the study data. Section 3.5 describes how the analysis was performed and 3.6 covers ethical issues. The research involved in depth ethnographic methods and as researcher I was deeply embedded and very close to the research context, I therefore dedicate the next section to reflecting on my role as researcher and the research process, before concluding.

3.1 Ontology and Epistemology

A qualitative mode of sociological enquiry seeks to capture rich detailed descriptions of social reality from the perspective of research participants. This kind of empirical approach tends to take a broadly interpretative perspective, viewing reality as a social construction that is not definitively objective or immutable (Mason, 2002). Nevertheless, it functions as an everyday reality that has 'objective facticity' for the social agents embedded in it and whose individual subjective activity produces this reality which they (and the social scientist) must then interpret and make sense of (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). It is these interpretations and their sociological importance that qualitative enquiry seeks to understand. This is the ontological stance I take in line with the theoretical position I outlined in the previous chapter. This theoretical position was determined by an understanding of alienation within the food system and critical reading of the alternative and local food literature. In this respect, the Marxist approach to understanding well-being is informed by the research context as opposed to seeking to measure a specific objective account of well-being.

DeLind (2010) argues that contextual analysis is essential to the study of food systems particularly in order to distinguish a more progressive local food movement from market approaches which invoke it. Whilst a contextual approach should provide space for the subjective views of research participants it is also necessary to retain an awareness of the systemic structures that shape these views acknowledging that any analysis cannot be "values-free" (DeLind, 2010, p. 274). The kind of understanding of a contextual analysis that DeLind argues for is comparable to Marx's method of descent. This method begins with the experienced reality, and draws on critical concepts fundamental

to understand this reality, returning to the empirical reality equipped with these concepts in order to enhance our understanding of it:

> "From this perspective we see that all case studies necessarily internalize theory construction." (Harvey, 2006, p.86)

Marx understood the dialectical relationship between the individual and society, and the material and the social, this dialectical method was at the heart of his work (Osborne & Sayers, 1990, Chapter 7). Therefore although people's lives are shaped by the social norms, social and material relations, people also recreate these formative aspects that make up the social reality through their daily actions: ; "…just as society itself produces man as man, so is society produced by him." (Marx, 1959, Chapter 44). Reflecting this socially constructed understanding of social reality the methodological approach I take allows people to define well-being in their own terms but is informed by the theoretical understanding of how CFOs can support well-being, elucidated in chapter 2. Since I am interested in how the experience of participation in CFOs supports people's sense of well-being, capturing this experience requires rich detailed descriptive data which can only be generated through qualitative enquiry. Although I do not draw on a pre-specified notion of well-being, but instead draw on the experiences of participants of CFOs, the approach to collecting or generating this data is of course shaped by the Marxist understanding of well-being already outlined. It would be disingenuous to suggest that the way in which this data is generated is completely objective, the process of collecting data is of course determined by the research design and aims embodied in the researcher. However, a qualitative mode of enquiry is very good at telling us '*how things work in particular contexts*' which may still permit us to say something more general cross contextually (Mason, 2002, p. 1). This is important given the explorative nature of this research; it seeks to establish how well-being is supported in the particular context of CFOs. The findings though may have wider significance in helping to inform what is important in supporting well-being in other forms of alternative and local food or more generally, without being able to make any fundamental claims of generalisability.

3.2 Research Design

This study is motivated by an understanding of CFOs as spaces where productive activity is not shaped by the goal of creating profit but shaped by an alternative values. The central aim is to understand *how the construction of well-being in CFOs can be understood to address alienation in the food system?* The key area of interest then is the everyday practices of CFOs and how the experience of participation in them is understood by participants to contribute to their well-being. In section 2.7 of the previous chapter I discussed the existing literature on the two types of CFO that this study focuses on. Although there are a number of studies, very few have sought to explore the lived experience of either community gardens (Turner, 2011) or community supported agriculture schemes (Hayden & Buck, 2012). Therefore research that engages with CFOs in this way addresses an important gap. Although I have spelled out the detrimental impact of the dominant structures of production in the food system, if we recall Marx's broader understanding of productive activity, this suggests we can look beyond formal structures of production for critical fractures (Holloway, 2012, DeLind, 2010). Participation in CFOs invites people to grow some of their own food, inviting them to 'get their hands dirty' in contrast to the uniform sanitized offerings of the conventional food system. Thus participation engages the body along with other material elements that the production of food involves, such as soil, weeds etc. The embodied practices of the CFOs studied diverge then from weaker forms of alternative food which 'which tend to position people as end-product consumers of food.' (Turner, 2011, p.510). Study of embodied practices like the food growing activities of CFOs are best supported by an ethnographic approach which enables the researcher to experience the reality of participants, enabling them to understand 'Non-representational forms of knowledge' which 'are based in experience' (Hayden & Buck, 2012, p. 333). Hayden and Buck distinguish between non-representational and representational forms of knowledge arguing for a diversity of methods which enable the research to capture both forms (2012, p.335). This study echoes this diversity, although I prefer to talk of generating knowledge rather than capture, acknowledging that "research data is generated through the research process rather than pre-exists it" (Riach, Rumens, & Tyler, 2015, p. 4). Representational ways of knowing are

also useful in generating data through interviewing or survey methods. Although information conveyed in this more conventional way can be mediated, qualitative interviews enable rich detailed descriptions of participants' experiences to be generated. Therefore this study employs ethnographic methods alongside qualitative interviewing and surveys. I have already specified the main aim of the research, this entails a number of sub-questions in order to understand the experience of participation in CFOs

Formulating the Research Questions

The main research question I have specified as above: *How can the construction of well-being in CFOs be understood to address alienation in the food system?* In order to answer this question it is essential to understand the experience of participating in community food organisations; moreover it is necessary to understand how they enable people to realise well-being. My approach to well-being has been guided by an interpretation of the dominant food system as alienating, and as alternative and local forms of food like the CFOs as addressing this alienation. In section 2.6 I also identified themes extant in the literature on alternative and local food which overlap with the dimensions of alienation, as defined by Marx. Therefore, in seeking to understand how participation enabled people to realise well-being I focussed on the role CFOs played in facilitating a relationship with the natural environment, the social aspects of participation, the nature and organisation of work and how the CFOs enabled people to realise agency or self-realization. Consequently, the main research aim or question detailed above entails a number of sub-questions:

- What is the experience of participating in community food organisations?

- What benefits do people hope to derive from participation – what are their motivations for becoming involved? (And how are these realised?)

- How does participation in CFOs support well-being through interaction with the natural environment?

- In what ways do the social aspects of participation in CFOs impact on well-being?

- How does a sense of agency contribute to well-being through participation?

- How does the experience of work at CFOs contribute to participants' sense of satisfaction and wellbeing?

- How does the organisational structure and form of community food initiatives impact on people's experience of participation and their sense of well-being?

- In what other ways does participation in community food initiatives impact on people's well-being?

The focus on the dimensions of alienation is reflected in the interview topic guides (appendices 1 and 2) and the presentation of the findings in chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7. Chapter 4 profiles each CFO involved in the study, this is important in uncovering the nature of the organisation of each project and also familiarises the reader with the context. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 deal more explicitly with the dimensions of alienation. They explore how the CFOs enabled people to realise a meaningful relationship with nature, to build social relationships and the experience of work at CFOs and how this was fundamental to the sense of agency they experienced as outlined in the sub-questions above. Following on from these findings chapters, the discussion chapter deals with the main research question in analysing the extent to which the CFOs function as alternative de-alienated spaces of production. Crucial to being able to address this question was the way in which the CFOs offered an alternative experience of productive activity to that defined by capitalism. Therefore how this participation in an alternative form of productive activity was experienced by members of CFOs, and what motivated them to engage in the CFOs were also key sub-questions listed above. The aim being to understand what members perceived to be the benefits of participation, particularly in terms of well-being. The approach taken to understanding how well-being was supported through participation in CFOs was guided by the concept of alienation rather than limited by it. Therefore a further sub-question addressed whether there were other ways in which people thought participation in CFOs benefitted their well-being. The concept of alienation plays a key role in this thesis both in guiding the research questions and in understanding that data generated. In chapters 1 and 2 I have presented an understanding of the

conventional food system as alienating in a range of ways and alternative sites of production as potentially beneficial for well-being because of their de-alienated nature. However, this is not purely a priori assumption or position I adopt, through personal experience of CFOs and my pilot interviews alienation emerged as a key conceptual tool to understand them. In chapters 1 I unpacked this conception of alienation to understand its different dimensions and how this related to theoretical and empirical understandings of the damaging consequences of the conventional food system. In chapter 2 I expanded on this and drew parallels between some of the literature on alternative and local food and the dimensions of alienation as Marx expounded it. It is important to note then that the research questions, although guided by this reading of the literature, were also influenced by my own lived experience of participation in CFOs and those of people I knew and the conversations I had as well as initial pilot interviews.

3.3 Sample: Selecting and accessing the research sites

Throughout this thesis I have stressed the need to explore spaces outside of capital that constitute productive activity not shaped by it, this was the key rationale in determining the research sites. The experience of being involved with a community food organisation is in marked contrast to that of sourcing food conventionally which typically only extends as far as the exchange of money for a food product. Food bought via markets or farmers markets might be embedded within the context of a more meaningful or extended social exchange as well as a different aesthetic to a convenience store or supermarket, but is not obviously comparable with what is entailed in involvement in a CFO (Turner, 2011). Furthermore it is not possible to distinguish between these provisioning practices discretely; the people interviewed as part of this research also used more conventional means to source their food and this provided some opportunities for comparison. It had initially been my intention to compare the experience of CFOs with that of sourcing food locally through more conventional retail outlets. The first proposal for the research had intended to interview people sourcing local food through more conventional channels utilising a local food challenge being run by transition groups in

the region[16]. This could have been an opportunity to further uncover the distinctions between sourcing food from initiatives like CSA and CGs where consumers are brought into production and more conventional relationships of retail exchange. However, it wasn't feasible to collect and analyse this data in addition to the qualitative data being collected at the four research sites, nor did it necessarily make sense to make this comparison. As I refined the research aims and methodology through reading the relevant literature and my involvement in the food projects themselves, it became clear to me that the real research interest, and need, was in describing the experience of participation of CFOs in depth. The ability to adapt the research design in response to research needs in this way is a feature of qualitative research embedded in the social reality it explores (Kingsley et al., 2009, p. 210). There are already a number of studies that look at people's reasons and motivations for sourcing local food (Chambers et al., 2007; Darby & Batte, 2006; Zepeda & Li, 2006) as well as a number which examine alternative markets like farmers markets (Conner, Colasanti, Ross, & Smalley, 2010; Kirwan, 2004; Lyson, 1995; Pascucci et al., 2011). For these reasons the research focussed instead on a detailed exploration of the practice of participation in CFOs and the implications for people's well-being.

 My familiarity with the research setting, through involvement in some of the CFOs, meant that I was more aware how the organisational form of both CSA and CGs brought people into production of food, and the implications of this. Without experience of existing projects and social groups connected to local and alternative food, this understanding would have been less apparent, but these links also

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[16] There is a broad swathe of activities subsumed under the banner of the Transition Movement, they tend to be community led responses to the challenge of climate change and declining fossil fuel reserves often referred to as peak oil (Aiken, 2012; Bailey, Hopkins, & Wilson, 2010). See also https://www.transitionnetwork.org/support/what-transition-initiative
One of the ways the Transition movement aims to address peak oil and climate change is through promoting production and consumption of local food. There are a number of initiatives in the Eastern region and following on from the success of a local food challenge run by Transition Ipswich in 2012 this was broadened to a Suffolk wide food challenge in 2013 see http://30milefood.transitionipswich.org.uk/ for more information. In principle it challenges participants to try and source all of their food (with some reasonable exceptions) within a radius of thirty miles for thirty days. Transition groups have popularised the local food challenge as a way of engaging people with local food, the origins are unclear but are associated with other community based movements such as The Fife Diet (http://fifediet.co.uk/) and popular books like "The 100-mile diet: A year of Local Eating" (Smith & Mackinnon, 2007)

facilitated access to the research sites. I first became involved with the Oak Tree Low Carbon Farm, one of the CSAs involved, through the Transition Ipswich group where I met its initiator. Although I didn't become a member of the CSA until 2013 I knew several of the people involved and I had been part of original discussions about a potential CSA within Transition Ipswich. As a result of this I had helped to plant trees for the forest garden[17] at the Oak Tree back in 2010, prior to the CSA's launch in Spring of 2011 and I'd also been part of a 'pig club'[18] who kept pigs on the CSA land, and were integrated into its management from 2012-2014. Therefore I had a number of personal and social ties to the CSA, although I hadn't actually experienced being a member until the research commenced. It was as a result of these connections that I became aware of Hempsals Community Farm, when I met its initiator at a regional CSA gathering at the Oak Tree in June 2013. This history of involvement and existing social links meant that gaining access to conduct participant observation and interviews at the CSAs was straightforward, but it also meant I 'fitted in'. I consider the impact of my closeness to the research context further in section 3.6, where I reflect more on my position as researcher.

I also had a history of involvement at one of the community gardens, and as a result already knew a number of people involved in the project. I had first began going to the People's Community Garden (PCG) several years ago, having heard about it through a friend of a friend who worked there. At the time I was living in a terraced house with only a small concrete yard for a garden and was interested in the growing space available at the PCG. As a result I ended up taking on a small 'patchwork plot', which was 2m^2 to start growing my own food, I gave this up eventually when I moved into a house with a bigger garden, although I continued to be sporadically involved with events there. It was during the early stages of this research and through connections at the PCG that I heard about a similar project in Colchester, called the Big Garden. I had not been aware of Big Garden before but it operated

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[17] This is a method of planting which intends to create productive space both vertically and horizontally; apple trees might provide a crop at head height with clumps of perennial fruit vegetables produce below.
[18] Pig clubs are a small co-operative group where the responsibility and cost for rearing pigs to slaughter is collectively shared. They have undergone a resurgence of late as a way of enabling people to produce their own meat according to principles of production they support although they have their origins in the Second World War when they were encouraged by the government to supplement meat rationing and reduce food waste.

with a similar ethos and approach to the PCG. All of the CFOs that participated in the research involved people in the production of food which was then distributed to participants who took it home to be consumed. This common factor was the key reason for approaching them for the research; they all closed the gap between production and consumption and the production of food was not driven by the need to realise profit. The four organisations involved are all unique and there are important differences between them, which I discuss in depth in the next chapter, where I present a profile of each project. However, it was the common factor, an alternative, de-alienated organisation of production, which was decisive in selecting them as research sites.

3.4 Generating the data

The fieldwork for this research took place over 21 months, between June 2013 and February 2015. Interviews took place at the four community food organisations over the course of 18 months between August 2013 and February 2015. Throughout this period ethnographic observations were also captured in a research diary, although ethnographic observation preceded the interviews, beginning earlier in the summer in June 2013. Surveys were also collected at 3 of the research sites, between June 2014 and December 2014, both in person and online using Qualtrics survey software. All the CFOs were happy to grant permission for me to carry out participant observation, interviews and surveys, however it was not necessarily so straightforward to find willing interviewees. In a sense the observation pre-dated the research by a significant period of time, in that I was already familiar with some of the projects, although I only began recording data two months before interviews commenced. For these reasons, opportunities to collect interview data arose quite naturally. This was very helpful in terms of conducting pilot interviews to refine the topic guide but it also meant that the sample of interviewees was defined by the opportunity to collect data rather than being more purposive. The survey was applied retrospectively to get a sense of how much interviewees reflected the wider population of participants, in hindsight it may have been preferable to run the survey first and use that to recruit interviewees. However this may not have been realistic, all of the community

food initiatives had relatively small populations of active members/volunteers so recruiting participants in this way may have been difficult. Although I did manage to conduct two further interviews with volunteers at the Big Garden because they had filled in a survey. Gathering interviews in this way does mean that you are potentially more likely to get those people who are more passionate or enthusiastic about the projects rather than those who had interacted with the project but disengaged with it. However the intention was not to collect data that was generalizable which would have been difficult anyway given the heterogeneity of the projects and those participating in them.

The biggest challenge was collecting interviews at both community gardens, the People's Community Garden in particular. It is not possible to be sure of the reasons why but I give a more detailed description of each research site in the next chapter which provides more insight on how the context impacted on data collection. In short though, the garden tended to draw in significant proportion of participants via referrals from employment support and other social services who were perhaps more wary of consenting to record their views. Also the qualitative survey data that I collected there suggested that people thought it was self-evident what the well-being benefits of such projects were, so arguably couldn't see much merit in giving up an hour of their time to talk about it. A further consideration is that many of the interviews took place at the projects themselves and an hour given up for an interview was an time not gardening or working at the project, which was the express reason people were there. Moreover all of the projects depended on this contribution of work so there was a tension in collecting the data in this way, hence where possible I tried to carry out interviews in people's spare time, but this depended on their availability and willingness. So although there may have been advantages to carrying out the surveys in advance they were also a useful tool to pick up additional qualitative data from those who felt unable to participate in interviews for whatever reason. Had this been the initial phase of data collection though it might have acted as a barrier to carrying out interviews since the effort of participating in a much shorter survey was often more appealing to people.

Semi-structured interviews

The data generated through semi-structured interviews forms the main body of the empirical data for this thesis, although it was supported by ethnographic and survey data, which also included some open ended questions. In total 24 interviewees (in 23 interviews) took part in the research, the interviews were comprised as shown in table 3.1 below. It will be clear from the table that there was quite an uneven spread of interviews. The reasons for this are partly due to the total number of participants involved in each project, their willingness to participate and the constraints in collecting the data. For instance, the Oak Tree CSA was much larger than Hempsalls comprising of approximately 60 box subscriptions or 'working shares' at the time the research was carried out whereas Hempsalls was much smaller only comprising of approximately 20 subscriptions. It was also much easier to collect data not only because it was closer to where I was based but also because I was an active member of the Oak Tree CSA. Although this was also the case for the People's Community Garden, where I had a history of volunteering and involvement in events, it was much harder to collect interviews. The same was true for the Big Garden where it was difficult to find interviewees willing to give up an hour or so to talk about their experiences. This is reflective of the different kinds of people these types of projects attract and their reasons for involvement. Both CSAs attracted people to join who had a desire to become involved with their food production for a range of reasons. Whereas volunteers at CGs were often people who at some point had been 'referred' or signposted to the community gardens.

The interviews were semi-structured in that a flexible topic guide (see appendix 1) was used to steer the interview but the interviewees were given latitude to go beyond these topics and the interviews did not necessarily follow a linear order. A separate topic guide was devised for interviewees who were staff of the respective initiative rather than members or volunteers (see appendix 2). At the time of interview, demographic data was also collected from each interviewee, this included age, income, ethnicity alongside other information, see appendix 3 for the full range of information. This was collected in order to get a sense of the kind of people who were participating in each project. Local

and alternative food are frequently associated with middle class, well-educated consumers (Blake et al., 2010) and whilst some studies, have supported this association (Chen, 2013; Perez et al., 2003) others have questioned the extent to which this is true (Dowler et al., 2009).

Table 3.1 Interviewees and survey respondents and project affiliation

Name of Community Food Organisation	Type of Project	Interviews with CFO participants	Interviews with CFO staff	Total Number of interviews	Number of surveys
Big Garden Project (Colchester)	CG	4	1	5	10
Hempsall's Community Farm, Willingham (nr Cambridge)	CSA	5	1	6	2
The Oak Tree Low Carbon Farm (Ipswich)	CSA	9 (including 2 pilot interviews & 1 joint interview)	1	10	16
The People's Community Garden (Ipswich)	CG	1	1	2	10

Source: Author

The topic guides were developed on the basis of the research questions which were informed by the understanding of well-being derived from the literature review described in chapter 2, they were further refined by the pilot interviews carried out with two members of the Oak Tree CSA. The topic guide was divided into five broad areas: Personal backgrounds and motivations for joining the CFO, describing the experience of participation, environment work and agency, social aspects of participation, involvement and organisation in how the project is run. This sought to generate data which could answer the research questions but also allow latitude for the interviewees to describe the experience of involvement and its benefits in their own terms. The interviews were intended to last approximately an hour but this was flexible; the shortest was twenty one minutes long and the longest 1 hour and forty six minutes and they averaged approximately 1 hour 10 minutes. In asking people

about these topics the intention was to build up a picture of what participation in each project constituted for them and how this supported their well-being. The interview topics focused on how interaction with the environment, agency and social interaction are supportive of well-being in the context of community food organisations and the role that organisational form and structure might play. The way in which the projects included in the research bring consumers into the arena of production was a common factor between them and essential to their inclusion. However, I also wanted to explore the diversity in organisational structure within the projects and how the experience of participation was shaped by this and how in turn this reflected on the sense of well-being they derived by participants. The topic guide for staff in the CFOs also sought to generate data in order to understand the experience of participation of members, but from the perspective of staff. Other sections focused on motivations and background were intended to prompt interviewees to expand on the wider context out of which the projects were initiated and the aims that shaped the organisation of the project. Finally the well-being of the staff involved in these projects as well as members was included. Qualitative interviews typically continue until data saturation is considered to be reached, whereby no new information is coming to light (Chen, 2013, p. 38). Although this is an unrealistic ambition since it is always possible to gain new insights, after 23 interviews, very little additional information relevant to the research questions was being elicited.

Survey Data

In addition to the 23 interviews 38 surveys were collected at the four research sites, see table 3.1 for a breakdown of how these were distributed. Reasons for collecting the survey data were two-fold; firstly, to contextualise the interviewees in the wider population of participants; to what extent were they representative of the people involved in these projects? Secondly, given the difficulty in collecting interview data at both community gardens the survey also included four open ended questions which were tape recorded like the longer semi-structured interviews.

The survey sought to collect the same basic demographic data as that collected through the interviews, for comparative purposes, (see appendix 4). The four open ended questions included were:

- Why did you decide to get involved with the CSA/Community garden?

- What are the things you enjoy about being part of the CSA/Community garden?

- How has being involved in the CSA/Community garden had an impact on your life?

- What would you miss most of you were no longer involved in the CSA/Community Garden?

The majority of the surveys were carried out in person, with the exception of 2 with Hempsalls Farm members, 1 Oak Tree member and four Big Garden volunteers which were completed online. The reason that I carried out the surveys in person was predominantly so that I could elicit responses to the open ended questions which were intended to generate further qualitative data. An online version of the survey was distributed to maximise responses and collect more demographic data from CFO participants. The questions were framed to encourage survey respondents to elaborate the most important aspects of participation in the project and the impact on their well-being. These questions were developed on the basis of my experience with interviews already carried out and were intended to produce responses that could provide rich detailed information relevant to the research questions. It was not possible to elicit the level of detail on different areas that the interviews produced but it did generate relevant data. It also enabled me to collect qualitative data beyond ethnographic observation at both community gardens where participants in the project were more reluctant to take part in longer interviews.

Ethnographic Observation

The main period of participant observation took place between the summer of 2013 and summer of 2014. As a member of the Oak Tree CSA I was required to complete my work commitment, which was equivalent to 1.5 hours per week throughout the year. This meant that I participated in regular work

parties on a Saturdays and also visited the farm on other days of the week and attended social events. Whilst collecting interviews and surveys I also regularly volunteered at the two community garden sites although this was concentrated more in the summer when freedom from work commitments enabled me to spend more time there. I visited Hempsalls farm CSA on three occasions to collect interviews and this was interspersed with time spent working with other members and sharing lunch on two working Saturdays. I had a different level of involvement with the four CFOs and this impacted on the extent of participation and observation. During the period of observation I kept a research diary to record my experiences in the CFOs. It is important to note the distinction between observation and participation, although the two overlapped my participation in some of the CFOs preceded and has continued beyond the research. It has therefore informed my understanding of them throughout and although less explicit than observation it grounded me in the reality of research participants. The aim of the participant observation was to supplement the data generated through interviews and also validate it. Ethnographic approaches are useful in this respect, revealing "the multifunctionality as well as the inconsistency and changeability of real behaviors" (DeLind, 2010, p. 280). It would be possible through selective use of the data to present a romanticized account of experiences of participating in CFOs, the reality, however is more nuanced. For instance, the packets of mass produced biscuits that sit alongside the home-made courgette or beetroot cakes at tea break time. Likewise the contents of a mid-winter box from the Oak Tree comprising of a few grubby Parsnips and an array of green leafy vegetables that are all a variation on cabbage, as compared to a mid-summer box overflowing with produce. The modern food system tends to shield us from the vagaries of production and this is both a good and bad thing. Ethnographic research tends to reveal these contradictions as Hayes-Conroy observed in a study of Slow Food. Members of this alternative food movement also expressed nostalgia for industrially produced sliced white bread that had been replaced by wholesome ryes and sourdoughs (Hayes-Conroy, 2010, p. 738). These seemingly contradictory aspects reflect that despite the alternative nature of these counter movements "solving every problem at once is usually not possible through everyday practice." (Galt, Gray, & Hurley, 2014,

p. 135). And that the formation of food preferences is visceral as well as political; a fluid process that is not necessarily consistent.

The community gardens also reflected these tensions through the various ways that people became involved in them. Whilst someone might simply wander through the gate and volunteer as I initially had done at the PCG they could also have been referred to the garden via the job centre as part of a back to work programme. It was only through spending time at the community garden that this reality was revealed. The enforced volunteerism of 'neoliberal workfare regimes' that brought participants into the PCG in this way could be interpreted as an indicator of their complicit role in re-enforcing this neoliberal capitalist agenda (Crossan, Cumbers, McMaster, & Shaw, 2016, p. 3). However this would be an over simplification, as would an overly romantic view. The individuals I spoke to who had become 'volunteers' through this route derived important benefits from their experience, whilst resenting the enforced nature of their involvement. The reality is that the CFOs "… may exemplify both a form of actually existing neo-liberalism and a simultaneous radical counter-movement arising in dialectical tension."(McClintock, 2014, p. 148). Some critics have sought to underline these contradictions as fundamental flaws to spaces like the CFOs as genuine alternatives (See Potter & Westall, 2013; Pudup, 2008 for example). However, the reality of participating in them revealed convivial spaces that were self-evidently beneficial for well-being and participants who were often openly critical of the dominant food system, despite some inconsistency in terms of practices.

3.5 Data Analysis

The qualitative data was analysed via thematic analysis, which was assisted by transferring all data into the Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) Nvivo. Initially the first six interviews (including pilots) were transcribed verbatim and coded to explore emergent themes in the data. The topic guide for the interviews was revisited after this but no changes were made. Following this initial coding a further five interviews were transcribed verbatim and the data was coded again, from this, a coding framework was developed that was representative of the themes in the data (see

appendix 5). The remaining 12 interviews were then coded according to this framework and all handwritten entries to the research diary were typed and coded, along with responses to the open ended survey questions. The final data themes were then refined on the basis of all of the data analysed (see appendix 6). This iterative approach to formulating the main themes to emerge from the data was taken because the research is explorative and the methods of generating data are open ended. However, the presentation of the main themes of the data, in chapters 5, 6 and 7 of this thesis, are also guided by the research questions. The content of these chapters does not include all of the themes captured in the final thematic framework illustrated in appendix 6, but the findings draw material from these themes. Although, it should be acknowledged that the findings are not intended to be an exhaustive account of the wealth of data generated through the research, but are presented in order to address the research questions.

3.6 Ethics and Anonymity

The research questions do not demand information that is sensitive or controversial, but the sort of detailed descriptions that a qualitative approach captures are always personal. Therefore informed consent was sought for all interviews and surveys. Each respondent was provided with an information sheet, describing the purpose and nature of the research and detailing how their research would be stored and used. Whilst it would have been possible to give the CFOs pseudonyms the number of projects like this in East Anglia mean that it would be quite straightforward to identify them. Therefore I do not provide pseudonyms of the projects themselves, but all interview and survey data is anonymised in order to protect individual identities. Where quotes do refer to people I have used pseudonyms. When a quote is used, a code is supplied to identify the specific project and type of project the interviewee participated in. For example 2-CSA-OT would identify the second interview undertaken which was conducted with a member of the Oak Tree CSA. Where a quote is drawn from survey data the number is preceded with an S and a P in the case of pilot interviews, a code ending in 'Dir' denotes a quote from an interview with a member of staff. The four staff of the CFOs who were

interviewed all had a directing role in the project which is why the identifier 'Dir' is used (these codes are also explained in the list of acronyms on page 9). In the case of a few surveys and interviews couples were interviewed together, where this is the case the same number is used to identify the particular survey/interview, but a letter distinguishes between speakers.

It may not always be possible or practical to seek informed consent for every instance of participant observation, but I did gain approval from each project to carry this out and was clear about my role as researcher. Although, my personal involvement in some of the CFOs meant that this might have been overlooked by some participants. However the research aims are unlikely to cause concern for people who are included in any observation and where I have used ethnographic data I have taken care to protect individual anonymity. In order to insure that all ethical considerations were addressed the methods adhered to the ethical guidelines for research laid down by the University of Essex where approval was granted for the study before any data was collected.

3.7 Reflexivity

The position of the researcher – be it detached observer or collaborative companion – has an impact on the way the research is carried out and the data generated (Berger, 2013). Therefore there is a need for researchers to be reflexive about their position and also in their methods when conducting research (Blaikie, 2009, pp. 54–6; Blee & Taylor, 2002, p. 96). In the case of this research it was very difficult for me to adopt a position of detached observer, as well as being the researcher I had also been involved with two of the food projects (Peoples Community Garden and the The Oak Tree CSA) prior to the research commencing. This gave me somewhat of an insider status and my role as CSA member and active participant in community food organisations inevitably informed my approach to the research. However all research is coloured by the background of the researchers who undertake it[19], whether it is their theoretical leanings or their experience of and or attachment to an empirical

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[19] See Weber's value relevance (Scaff, 1998, pp. 39–40)

setting, furthermore this insider knowledge might also be regarded as an advantage. Being embedded in the research context meant that I was far removed from the traditional positon of the anthropologist cast as a 'fish out of water'. This brought its own challenge in that my familiarity meant that my perspective was not freshly impressed. Instead I attempted to consider the questions I asked of other participants from my perspective as participant and be reflective about my own involvement throughout.

Although I was not familiar with the other two research sites; Hempsalls Farm CSA and the Big Garden, this research project has been shaped by my personal history as well as my background as a researcher. My existing connections to people involved with food projects have to some extent grown out of my previous research interest in the Transitions movement for my MA dissertation. It would be impossible to ignore such experiences since they clearly play a role in shaping my outlook both as a researcher and illustrate my motivations which have shaped the research agenda itself. The possibility of doing objective research is not in line with the ontological and epistemological standpoint I outlined earlier in this chapter, but it should also be clear that researchers can be more or less embedded in particular research contexts and this needs to be acknowledged. My involvement in food projects both prior to and during the research might be considered to create 'bias' through an overly positive account. However as Laura B. Delind's (1999) account of her involvement in a CSA attests ethnographic study of such projects are as likely to emphasize the negative aspects as the positive (see also Hayden & Buck, 2012). The idea that research can take place in an objective vacuum is a fallacy therefore a more reflective consideration of how the research has been shaped is preferable to a sanitized version as DeLind also argues:

> "We do ourselves a disservice, I think, when we continually separate ourselves from the subject of our inquiry and turn the objects of our concern into abstractions—once again privileging dichotomies" (DeLind, 2010, p. 280).

This emphasizes the need to "think more critically and reflexively about the constitution of subject positions within the research process" (Riach et al., 2015, p. 2).

Beyond reflecting on the impact of the researcher it is also important to consider how the research process itself evolved and how this affected the data gathered and eventual findings. My insider status meant that I fitted in to the CFOs so that people did not always see me as a researcher, although this varied in different sites given my different level of involvement. This acceptance was advantageous in that it meant the practices I observed were more likely to be genuine, unguarded presentations of self, but I then had to transition to a researcher status. My role as researcher meant asking questions of people, that I as a CFO participant would seemingly know the answer to, and sometimes already did, such as how long people had been involved in a project. Therefore there was a tacit assumption that I was in already aware of the benefits of participation, which meant that sometimes it was necessary to probe respondents to draw out their own perspectives. Whilst I don't want to suggest that I was in disagreement with participants who articulated a positive account of their experiences, there were clear differences between their own perspectives and mine. Furthermore the purpose was not to generate data that simply confirmed my interpretation of the experiences of participating in CFOs, but to present a credible reality of the experience of CFOs in order to understand how this adresses alienation through realising well-being. As Mishler argues the "critical issue is not the determination of one singular and absolute 'truth' but the assessment of the relative plausibility of an interpretation when compared with other specific and potentially plausible alternative interpretations." (Mishler in Roulston, 2010, p. 202).

3.8 Conclusion

In the course of the first two chapters we have moved from a critical understanding of the problems of modern food system to potential counter hegemonic movements in the form of both well-being and local or alternative food systems (and critique of these) towards CSA and community gardens as potential sites of alternative production. In this chapter I have set out a methodological approach in line with the theoretical position outlined in chapters 1 and 2. Understanding CFOs as spaces which construct an alternative organisation of production, this study seeks to explore how these also spaces

realise well-being. I have emphasized the need for a qualitative approach to this research and reflected on the role that my position as researcher and the research process itself have played in shaping the research. In the next four chapters, I present the empirical data collected. These findings are framed in terms of the dominant themes that emerged out of the data and in response to the research questions as informed by the literature and theoretical approach. The three main themes are preceded by a description of the four research sites in the next chapter, in which I draw on the empirical data collected to fully contextualise the research and understand how the characteristics and context of each project shaped the experience of participation and its impact on well-being. The following three chapters then address the dimensions of alienation (and well-being) in turn. Although the way in which well-being is realised in CFOs could be disaggregated further I present these findings in three chapters because they align with the dimensions of alienation. The fifth chapter focusses on the role of CFOs in facilitating an active relationship with nature because this aspect of local and alternative food is emphasized in the literature. Likewise the role they play in building social relationships is also frequently highlighted, this follows in chapter 6. Chapter 7 focuses on work and agency because this feature of CFOs and alternative and local food more generally has been less well understood, and this builds toward the discussion chapter, which explores the extent to which CFOs can be understood a s genuinely evoking an alternative organisation of production.

Chapter 4 – Community Food Organisations in Profile

Introduction

Having set out the theoretical landscape and methodological approach this research takes I now want

to draw on the empirical data collected to describe the research context, this will also have a bearing

on the main analytic themes which are the focus of chapters 5, 6 and 7. In this chapter I focus on

describing the four research sites incorporating findings from the interviews, surveys and

ethnographic observations. In describing the projects I will cover the physical space of the projects

and their setting, but also the organisational structure and their origins. I also draw on the data to

describe the participants of the organisations and consider how the characteristics of each project and

those involved with it shaped the experience of participation. These descriptions are not intended to

be exhaustive, but they should provide a sense of each organisation. More importantly the make-up

of particular community food projects defines the way in which they are experienced and to what

extent and in what ways people benefit from them. The four organisations all differ in important ways

but there are also parallels. An obvious distinction and similarity is that two of them were Community

Supported Agriculture (CSA) schemes and two were Community Garden (CG) projects. Although each

individual project was unique I consider them as two groups based on this clear split I will outline the

two CSAs first, before moving on to the CGs. I attempt to consider each research site on its own terms

but dedicate some space to briefly reflecting on points of similarity and difference between them as

individual projects and as groups or types (of CSA and CG). However I will not go into much depth here

regarding the implications for the analytic themes, but in the following chapters that deal with the major themes I refer back to the descriptions presented here in chapter 4 where relevant. It should also be noted that the data informing the descriptions was collected during 2013-14 and that organisations are not static. This is particularly applicable given that they are all relatively recent organisations which are all civil society or third sector organisations that do not follow a market business model (Alcock, 2010). Their stability and viability is not firmly established and depends to some extent on accessing shifting funding streams and developing sustainable organisational models so they are therefore evolving and changing. Likewise the people involved with them come and go although many had been involved for a number of years. The identity of those involved as well as the organisation itself is to some extent fluid then and the descriptions that follow should be viewed as snapshots of the research sites, seen through the researcher's eyes at the time of data collection. Each of the four projects are described in detail in the following sections, for comparative purposes the key characteristics of each project are also captured in the table below.

Table 4.1 Characteristics of the Four Community Food Organisations Studied

Project Type	Community Supported Agriculture		Community Garden	
Project Name	Oak Tree Low Carbon farm	Hempsalls Community Farm	People's Community Garden	Big Garden Project
Location	Sub-urban, outskirts of Ipswich	Rural, just outside small village in Cambridgeshire	Urban, on allotment site within Ipswich	Sub-urban, within country park in Colchester
Date Established	2011	2011	2008	2006
Size of site	12 acres (4.96 ha)	5 acres (2.02 ha)	Approximately 0.5 acre (0.2 ha)	Approximately 0.6 acres (0.25 ha)
Organisational Structure	Community Interest Company	Informal – steered by board made up of 3 members and 2 owners.	Part of Registered Charity (Activlives)	Public service - Funded via public health and local authority
Approximate number of participants	50-60 shares (including individuals, families, couples)	20 shares (including individuals, families, couples	Variable: regular volunteers a relatively small group approx. 25, although participation in	Variable: regular volunteers a relatively small group approx. 25 although annual visitors including

			events much larger and also people attending courses typically take annual visitor numbers to 1500-2000	events are approximately 2000
Number of paid workers	2 full time directors plus occasional temporary staff	2	2 (although not full time since they work across other aspects of the charity)	2 (both part-time)
Main aims of the project	"Our aim is to create a financially viable and environmentally sustainable farm producing a plentiful and diverse supply of nutritious food for the community of people that works on the land, having a good time while doing so." Source: The Oak Tree Low Carbon Farm (2017)	1. To provide good quality, local food to members using sustainable agricultural techniques 2. To build a community who work together to share in the risks and rewards of farming 3. To help members to eat locally and seasonally 4. To be good stewards of our land by managing and enhancing its natural resources Source: Hempsals Farm (2017)	Key aim to improve the health and wellbeing of local population through providing access to growing and consuming fresh fruit and vegetables. Also provides a range of training and education opportunities.	"This large community vegetable garden and orchard aims to promote health and well-being by producing food in a sustainable way with community involvement." Source: The BIG Garden (2017)
Produce	Vegetables, eggs, pork, beef, flowers	Fruit and vegetables, honey, milk and cheese, eggs (duck and chicken, pork, lamb, turkey and goose	Fruit and vegetables, honey	Fruit and vegetables
Opening Hours	Not open to public except on annual open day.	Open to public for occasional special events. Regular	Monday, Wednesdays and Fridays 9.30am –	Open for volunteers and members of the

	Saturdays 10-4 for regular work party, open to members who wish to work at other times	work sessions for members on Saturdays and Wednesday afternoons	4.00pm, also open on weekends and other days for occasional events or special visits	public 10am to 1pm Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and alternate Saturdays

Source: Author

Community Supported Agriculture Organisations

4.1 Origins and History

In the case of both CSAs the individuals who initiated the projects are key, not only in getting the project off the ground but also in shaping it going forward. In the case of the Oak Tree Low Carbon Farm (hereon referred to as The Oak Tree)[20] the land for the CSA had been acquired by Leslie who had begun growing vegetables with a view to establishing a small agricultural business. The challenges of realising this and the collective interest in CSA in Transition Ipswich provided the impetus for the CSA.

> "I'd joined up with Transition Ipswich, with the food group and was going to the meetings and I'd get there and I'd be really exhausted, I mean like really knackered like I've never been knackered before, probably a bit grumpy, I'd lost a stone in weight because I was physically working so hard, I would eat my tea and I would order a takeaway late at night cos I was so hungry and so this clearly wasn't sustainable to the point I wasn't making any money...I just thought well why would people want to get involved with that [CSA], I don't want to be propped up by people who feel sorry for me, that's what I felt like, I wanted to make this a successful business and then people started coming and volunteering and people started showing a lot of interest and I thought hey this could work" 1-CSA-OT-Dir

An interest in sustainability and food production had motivated the purchase of the land and this persisted in the CSA despite the change from the original aim of establishing a market garden to achieve sustainable food production.

> "I wanted to marry the environmental concerns because food production is such a big impact on climate change and producing food...knew that I wanted to do vegetables cos that's what I knew

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[20] With all of the CFOs I refer to them by the shortened versions that participants tended to use in the case of the CSAs this was a shorter version of the full name of the project. Whereas in the case of the Big Garden project, project was simply dropped from the title and the People's Community Garden was typically referred to as the PCG so I have used this acronym.

about and I wanted to do it the low carbon way so I was using appropriate tools and did lots of reading" 1-CSA-OT-Dir

This is also evident in the name of the CFO 'low carbon' indicating it's sustainable focus, compare this with 'Hempsalls Community Farm' (hereon referred to as Hempsalls) suggestive of a more social then environmental focus. Hempsalls was initiated in 2011 by a husband and wife team, who had taken on a good deal of risk to purchase a cottage with an agricultural occupancy condition that needed major renovation and came with several acres of land. The inspiration for setting up the CSA had come from the positive experience of organising a pig club with a small group of friends the year before.

"So the plan was to get two pigs and four families and as soon as we started, people just kept going yeah I'll do it, so we ended up with three pigs and six families and we could have done far more um… But as part of that we'd had a few weekends where, the field you couldn't get into we had to cut back all the brambles um we had to part a tarp over the roof of the falling down stable in the corner, set up the electric fence you know all the jobs you do when you get some pigs. And so we got the families to come people who were there and everyone pitched in lent a hand, had a cup of tea, had a bit of cake and sort of at the end of the summer I was so inspired by that getting people together um and doing something like that and then the pork at the end was fantastic and I just sort of sat down and went how do I do more of that and so I started reading up about CSAs and sort of an idea began forming in my mind" 2-CSA-HF-Dir

Whilst the CSA was in part motivated by a positive experience of community generated by the collective production of food via a pig club it was also driven by a perceived lack of community.

"we're just in a small village with our church before and you knew that there were four hundred people in that village and there were a hundred that would come to village events, they'd get involved in things and it was the same hundred no matter what it was whether it was a church event or whether it was the village hall fundraising committee it was the same people going round in circles …and then there were a few hundred people who nobody knew who they were, you know you never saw them, you never got to meet them, they drove their car into Cambridge uh for work, they drove back they went shopping at Tesco's, you had nothing to do with them um and I just think that's all wrong and that there's a real sense of community missing um particularly from our small villages and places like this where we're essentially a commuter village for Cambridge fundamentally and so just getting people together from who wouldn't normally meet who possibly wouldn't normally meet anybody…" 2-CSA-HF-Dir

The perception that there was a weakened sense of community was something which had been sharpened by a two month stay working abroad in an African village where the community seemed much stronger than in the UK.

> "I mean I remember coming back , getting the train back from Heathrow, I don't know why and we were on the tube coming back, must have been to get the train up to Kings Cross, tube up to Kings Cross in London and for the first time in two months we saw miserable faces and yet all the people with those miserable faces had shoes and you just got into that mind-set, how can you be sad when you've got shoes, you know that's the rich and it's all wrong and thinking there's something really sick with our society the way we're so isolated from each other in this little bubble in the tube being miserable, um that just made me think we gotta do something about that, and that's part again another one of the facets of the motivation probably, ended us up here." 2-CSA-HF-Dir

Both CSAs were motivated by a wider need to be more sustainable or to address the lack of community and build social connections but this was rooted in personal experience.

> "I'd become interested in self-sufficiency in food for many many years, I'm now 43 and it started in my early twenties, um and got an allotment and things like that and just became fascinated by producing your own stuff, mostly food but stuff, um John Seymour's book of self-sufficiency and all that and had an ordinary office job. In parallel I started getting interested in environmental issues and got frustrated when I got into discussions with people and I couldn't answer the questions, so I did an A11 in environmental science and then studied um two MSc's one in environmental monitoring and management, down at um Suffolk college or university of East Anglia and then I did renewable energies in France, so I was getting more and more interested in environmental issues and getting more and more worried about that sort of thing." 1-CSA-OT-Dir

> "we we're also um involved with the house group at our church that had been doing a series on simplicity of living and you know worrying about what was essential and not worrying about what wasn't essential and that was feeding into my thinking as well about how much time I spent doing pointless things. How fundamentally pointless my job was I do software and you're very disconnected from anybody you might be helping at the other end" 2-CSA-HF-Dir

The strong personal motivation in setting up the CSAs for both individuals and the sense of fulfilment in doing so was critical. Both had undertaken a significant personal responsibility and degree of risk in setting them up and it is highly questionable whether either would exist without those key individuals, this also has implications for the organisational form they take. Although both were collective enterprises, as the definition 'community supported' agriculture implies, this wasn't explicitly

formalised in either CFO's structure. This was understandable given the degree of personal commitment and liability undertaken, by both founders.

> "Um so there's a big commitment and there was - and this is the issue - there was concern about getting involved in some kind of organisation (the CSA) that might reduce her control over her land. So having made this big commitment this huge personal commitment she didn't want to be in the situation where there was some kind of committee emerge that was telling her what to do with her land." P1-CSA-OT"

4.2 Physical space and location

Hempsalls was more isolated than the Oak Tree having a more rural location on the outskirts of a small village in Cambridgeshire whereas the Oak Tree was situated on the outskirts of the large county town of Ipswich. Hempsalls farm is situated just outside the village of Willingham, which lies roughly 10 miles north of Cambridge. Like many of the small villages in the area, it houses Cambridge bound commuters as wells as the farmers and workers that make up what's left of the agricultural workforce, although the importance of agriculture has diminished, there are echoes of it.

> "As you travel through these satellite villages you pass numerous small produce stalls offering seasonal vegetables, honey, eggs all hinting that producing food remains an important activity even if it is no longer the main economic one." Extract from field diary 28th September 2013

The landscape of the Hempsalls is somewhat in contrast to the open landscape around it; the space around the house being bounded by large trees and hedgerows. Beyond it to one side lies a small area of woodland just past a cluster of sheds which also includes a small poly-tunnel and the 'clubhouse' an important space for farm members. The woodland is home to chickens and a colony of bees, moving round clockwise from the woodland you pass several animal enclosures - including pigs, turkeys and goats - and the land opens up. Further on is the area for vegetable and some fruit production this is a patchwork of small raised beds broken up by a row of fruit, this part of the farm resembles an allotment site. Opposite the animal pens there is a patch of land fenced off as an area for children, including play equipment and beside it is a greenhouse and composting toilet. There are

also some large field scale plots for vegetable production, as you complete the circuit and return to the back garden you pass a couple of duck pens.

The Oak Tree CSA is situated on the margins of Ipswich although it appears much more rural than its urban proximity might suggest. On Playford lane the narrow road leading to the farm passing cars are infrequent enough to allow grass and other weeds to grow on the mixture of mud and sand that has accumulated in the middle of the lane, despite it being 5-10 minutes from central Ipswich. The Oak Tree site is a large field not unlike many other agricultural fields where hedgerows have been grubbed up to make more efficient use of the large machinery usually employed in farming, although in reality it is comparatively small, by East Anglian standards, at 12 acres. Straight ahead of the gate lie three polytunnels which extend the growing season for many of the farm's crops as well as protecting tender seedlings. Next to these against the west hedgerow is a small cluster of sheds and a covered area which serves as the main space for the CSA members to relax during tea breaks. Further along this hedgerow various pieces of 'junk' have been re-purposed as makeshift store houses and chicken runs. If you follow the hedgerow which extends east from the entrance you come to the beginnings of a 'forest garden' in its infancy, eventually intended to be a productive space. You can also see the beginnings of what could be new hedges within the boundaries of the field, Italian alder trees have been planted to act as a screen from the easterly winds can whip across the flattish Suffolk landscape. In the far corner of the field cattle graze. The area immediately around the polytunnels where most of growing activity takes place in a patchwork of vegetable beds interspersed with sheets of black plastic installed to combat the weeds. Pigs and chickens area also enclosed by electric fencing amongst the vegetable beds, all of the animals rotate around the site regularly and are used as a means of cultivating the soil by keeping weeds down and soil fertility up, but also produce meat and eggs for CSA members.

Both sites were quite rural in their setting despite the difference in proximity to urban areas and also quite typical of the predominantly flat East Anglian landscape. Prior to the CSAs establishment both

pieces of land had also been managed under conventional farming, although Hempsalls also included

an area of woodland and garden where this didn't apply. The rural feel of both settings is significant

in terms of how that might affect people's experience of the CSA:

> "Yeah I think there's an aspect, I mean we are out in the middle of nowhere, as you've seen, when you're out here you don't hear a car you could be a lot further away from civilization than you actually are because you just don't hear any of it you can't really see any of it um I mean you can see buildings on the skyline but not really so it does feel very peaceful and isolated out here, um in a way that a lot of people comment on how relaxing it is and how pleasant it is to be out here" 2-CSA-HF-Dir

One other physical difference to point out is the soil type at each site, when I arrived at Hempsalls for

the first trip to collect data I was quickly drawn into a conversation about this and how it compared at

the Oak Tree where I was a member. This might not seem significant but it did have an impact on how

the cultivation and management of the land was approached and experienced.

> "Planting potatoes is the least favourite job I think probably on the farm, cos it's so hard work in our heavy clay" 2-CSA-HF-Dir

In comparison to the nutrient rich clay of Hempsalls the Oak Tree had sandy, free draining soil which

was much more depleted from years of industrial agriculture and now being cultivated without the

synthetic fertilisers to compensate for this. Both soil types therefore provided challenges for the small

scale production undertaken but in different ways.

4.3 Organisational Structure

In both CSAs the actual CSA itself was informally constituted rather than being formally recognised as

an organisation. At Hempsalls there was a small board that met to plan and guide the direction of the

farm, this involved a handful of members although other members were encouraged to feed into this

process.

> "we try and get most people involved in the planning as well, so we've got a board who keep me in check, which is me and my wife and then three members, um which was important to us again, that there was more members than us, so that it's not, for the first year it was very much me saying I am starting a community farm this is how I think I'm starting it, we had a little steering group of

friends and other people we knew that had been involved in similar projects, um and they kind of helped get us in the right direction" 2-CSA-HF-Dir

Likewise at Oak Tree the CSA was defined as a Community Interest Company guided by three directors, although initially it had been more ad hoc. Establishing the Community Interest Company did formalize the not for profit aims and signal the intention to run the CSA for the benefit of its members and wider community but by joining the CSA members did not become part of anything formal.

"People aren't actually members of anything formal, as a member a member is not a member of the community interest company, the only members are the three directors but that's purely to keep it simple" 1-CSA-OT-Dir

The formal way in which the CSA was actualized was through the annual share that members purchased, in both CSAs members signed up to receive a share of the harvest in return for payment and fulfilling a work commitment although the specifics of how this was organised varied. At the Oak Tree members did not have a great deal of choice in terms of membership there was only one kind of share offered. Members were expected to work the equivalent of two hours per week (although there was flexibility in how this was fulfilled e.g. eight hours once every four weeks) throughout the busier Spring/Summer period (March-October) and the equivalent of one hour a week for the rest of the year. In addition they paid a weekly amount for their veg box this changed over the course of my membership, increasing slightly from £7.50 to £8.50[21] and was set yearly at an Annual General Meeting (AGM). At Hempsalls there were three different membership options: A full share, half share and a vegetarian share, all entailed the same work commitment of 2 'working sessions' a month in the growing season March-October (as defined by British Summer Time) and one per month for the rest of the year. The difference between the shares was the amount and type of produce received and the financial cost, full share members paid a monthly subscription of £65 whereas half shares paid £45 and vegetarian shares £35[22]. This is more than the Oak Tree but also included were meat, eggs, cheese

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[21] Note for the 2016-17 season this cost is not £9 per week according to the website of the OT http://www.the-oak-tree.co.uk/csaintro/ <accessed 23rd June 2016>

[22] Note that HF now offers an additional 'mini membership' option which costs £10 a month and enables people to participate in all of the work sessions, but without any work commitment and receive a monthly box of vegetables.

and honey produced at Hempsalls although veg boxes were only supplied to members between May and December as opposed to all year round at the Oak Tree. In addition to the shares Hempsalls also offered a farm 'friends' option where people could get involved by participating in working sessions and social events of the farm and purchase any surplus produce, the cost for this was a £25 annual subscription. Hempsalls also offered a trial membership acknowledging that the level of commitment required might not be for everyone so this enabled them to take up 3-4 month trial membership before deciding either way.

It should be noted that the boxes supplied through these CSA are quite different to the plethora of vegetable box schemes now available to UK consumers (Seyfang, 2008: 191). Both CSAs were clear that the boxes should not contain anything which wasn't produced on site. This was considered important for a number of reasons, which included assurance of freshness, locality and seasonality but also the methods by which the food was produced. Most typical box schemes tend to supplement their own production with additional items to provide year round consistent quantity and quality. Given CSA's emphasis on sharing the risks and rewards of agricultural production there was an implicit expectation that part of being a member was learning to eat seasonally and not be shielded from the vagaries of production by supplementing yields. In terms of the content of the boxes, both farms tended to grow a fairly conventional mix of seasonal vegetables although there were a few exceptions, for example Jerusalem artichokes (at Hempsalls) and unusual varieties of Kale like Russian Red (at the Oak Tree). Members of the Oak Tree also had access to eggs, beef and pork produced at the farm and seasonal cut flowers although these were purchased in addition to the share unlike at Hempsalls. Evidently the CSA share was unlikely to meet a families entire food needs, but it could contribute a substantial amount particularly in times of plenty. Equally though it could contribute very little in leaner times of the year, although both CSAs undertook preserving activities and stored crop like Pumpkins and potatoes to try and extend the harvest. Both schemes and therefore its members were exposed to uncertain yields, partly down to the weather but also because although a minimum work commitment was outlined. Members varied in the extent to which they met this commitment or went

beyond it, but as the main labour force of the farms production relied significantly on members. The aim of producing throughout the year at the Oak Tree was more challenging because of the growing conditions in the UK outside of the main growing season of March to October.

The CSA directors at both Hempsalls and the Oak Tree were its main 'staff' but members themselves carried out a lot of work. At the Oak Tree there was a larger membership of approximately 60 shares (although it had started much smaller at 24 shares) compared to approximately 20 at Hempsalls, membership fluctuated around this level depending on people dropping out of the scheme or the CSAs not quite filling all its places. The larger membership and three directors meant that the Oak Tree had a larger workforce and it did employ some seasonal workers on a part time basis who tended to be members or existing people known to the farm willing and able to work some hours. Those actually paid a wage for working at the farm were paid from the income derived from veg boxes and other products like pork and eggs although some grant funding was also topping up wages at times. The farm accounts were presented at the annual AGM detailing the financial situation as well as plans for the farm and a review of its progress, this also included the negotiation of the price of a share, which could be an uncomfortable experience for both members and the growers.

> "the set up when we first started was that people signed up for a year, they would pay six pounds a week and it could be either all in advance or monthly in advance...I believe it was eight hours or was eight two hour sessions, I don't think we had a work log, we did it as a doodle poll which is a right mess...then we realised we had to change things, we had a big meeting… and I'm sorry but if you've ever asked 24 people for a pay rise it's unbelievably embarrassing, and I said I'm sorry but I need more help and I need more money and I know this isn't the way to sell a product but I really do and everybody sat there and did the consensus thing where you wave your hands and say yes" 1-CSA-OT-Dir [Talking about the initial year the CSA started]

> "It's really quite awkward watching somebody essentially negotiate their own wages. But it is also quite tricky being asked to pay more and wanting to, because price setting is normally a one way process this is indeed an odd yet interesting experience. However everyone was happy to support a small increase and felt bad I think that the grower's wages were so low." Field notes Oak Tree AGM 3rd July 2014. [The vegetable shares had increased in cost over time in part to try and ensure the CSA's viability which was an ongoing challenge.]

In the case of Hempsalls the only nominal paid workers were the initiator and director and his wife with the productive space of the CSA essentially being part of the acreage of their property. Again Hempsalls had an AGM and discussions about the financial plan and position of the CSA also took place at the board constituted of the couple and three members. In the case of both CSAs and CSA in general this is a new organisational form, so there was a fair amount of trial and error not only in establishing a workable organisational structure but a fair and sustainable economic model and also successful food production practices. The AGM was the main formal channel that members had to have their say in the running of the CSA but informally in both CSAs members had opportunities to influence the project through discussion with the directors or board members and both depended on the input and 'buy-in' of members to succeed.

4.4 Organisation of work and activities

Whilst members of both CSAs are expected to complete a minimum work commitment in return for their share, there is a good deal of flexibility about how this is met. Both CSAs ran regular working 'sessions' or 'parties' on Saturdays and Hempsalls also ran a regular session on Wednesdays during the growing season. CSA members could also contribute outside of these times, but work outside scheduled work sessions was less structured and required more initiative, in that the CSA staff weren't necessarily there to direct. At the Oak Tree members had relative autonomy to come and go as they liked having access to the gate and shed codes to gain access and undertake work outside of regular work sessions. At Hempsalls there was more of an expectation that people notify the CSA director if they planned to come outside of the sessions although this was probably because the CSA shared its location with the family home whereas the Oak Tree was simply a large field.

At the Oak Tree the regular Saturday work day begins at 10am and is guided by a list of jobs on a blackboard, it finished at 4-5 and is punctuated with occasional breaks, where tea and coffee was served with biscuits. In terms of the jobs these tended to vary according to the season, for instance in Spring there was a lot of seed sowing to be done, although jobs like weeding were fairly constant. To

some extent there was a prioritisation of work although people could be selective if they didn't feel up to a particular job or had a preference for a specific task. The breaks were important moments to socialise and catch up with other members although equally this happened during the course of tasks as well. Work outside of the working parties was much more self-directed and sometimes solitary, but there was usually someone at the CSA in daylight hours in the main growing season. At Hempsalls interviews with members confirmed a similar approach to work and on my two visits to the farm the structure of working day seemed similar.

> "I find Glen, the founder of the farm chatting with members on the lawn, I share a cup of tea and chat to a couple of people there. We talk about the soil and how different it is here, having noticed the large clods of unworkable looking clay on the way in." Extract from field diary 28th September 2013

> "he's usually got a list of jobs that need doing for the day and he just sort of starts doling them out and I always work on the principle that if I turn up first I get first choice of jobs (laughs). Yeah so obviously there's repair jobs, obviously always harvesting or planting or weeding um, building things mending things, repairing things um tidying up um you know then there might be specific jobs where we've got to put some fencing up or move the pigs so there's always usually plenty to do." 8-CSA-HF

As the quote above demonstrates there is a wide range of jobs at the CSA which go beyond what might typically be considered for home scale food production. There was a wide range of jobs that members undertook at both CSAs but Hempsalls had a broader range of animals and seemed to be aiming for a more self-sufficient model than the Oak Tree although both went beyond what people could typically accomplish in their own gardens.

> "I mean there's a lot of stuff that you can't do in your own back garden, particularly cos we do so many animals um it's not. We're competing less with the, well I could just get an allotment or I could just do it in my back garden vegetable thing that you know you get genuine new experiences here and we try and do the odd crazy you know practical things. Um we built the cold smoker one time." 2-CSA-HF-Dir

> "It strikes me that it is a very diverse farm and they're aiming more towards a model of self-sufficiency than the Oak Tree." Extract from field diary 28th September 2013

In addition to regular trips to the farm to complete work commitments there were also more occasional events, such as the AGM already mentioned but also other social events and training sessions. At Hempsalls there were skill sharing sessions and preserving sessions to make the most of the harvest at the farm, this might be canning chutneys or learning how to make use of all of a side of pork.

> "you might have like a brewing night or a honey making night or something like that. I know a friend of ours who works down there built a machine for um, out of virtually nothing, just some old pieces of wood and a, a screw, a long bolt and screw and like a tin and it's a very, it looks really well made but it's obvious that he just got it out of old stuff and it's a thing for making sausages, and he brought it round the other day and you just pack it full of meat and then you turn the handle and it squashes it down through a funnel and we used to make chorizo sausages that are just hanging up now and we just did that yesterday and he just came round and showed us how to do it" 9-CSA-HF

Although the Oak Tree did run occasional courses that were open to members there was an additional cost for these so any skill sharing tended to be more informal and there were regular events where this could take place, which fitted with the production cycle of the farm. For example the regular 'wild food walk' which fell in the traditional hungry gap[23] when wild greens are a good source of supplementary food. The regular parties at the Oak Tree were also seasonal falling around summer and winter solstice and autumnal harvest. Like Oak Tree there were some social gatherings at Hempsalls and both ran open days as a way of encouraging new members and opening up the farm to visitors although in general they weren't public spaces. At Hempsalls there was a more active attempt to reach out to the local community to spread the word about the farm.

> "we started doing hatching in schools which is our first more sort of educational outreach we take an incubator full of eggs to a school, they hatch them out they keep the chicks for a week and bring em back to us um or we go collect them, so we're starting to do that kind of thing it's something we'd like to do a bit more of. We're also in talks with a nursery garden, nursery, not children nursery that is run for adults with mental health issues…and we're talking about starting a pilot project

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[23] This is a period in the growing season where winter varieties e.g. cabbage, kale and staple food that might be stored like carrots and potatoes are dwindling and new crops of the season are yet to come though. Depending on the weather this can affect yields throughout January to May but March-April is really where it tend to peak.

probably next spring with them here, doing something like that um yeah to basically to let more people get more benefit from this little chunk of what we've got" 2-CSA-HF-Dir

4.5 Participants

The CSAs were not exclusive in any way, but the people involved were a self-selected group and although it is difficult to say that they conformed to a particular type there was some commonality amongst them. It was possible to get a sense of this from the interviews and time spent at each CSA, demographic data collected through surveys and interviews provided additional information. On my initial visit to Hempsalls it was evident that there was an emphasis on families in the membership.

"When I reach Hempsalls farm I can hear the excited noises of children playing and laughter floating out of the drive, it sounds like I've arrived at a party… What also impresses itself is how much the kids are also enjoying themselves, one little boy bursting into tears because he doesn't want to leave. One of the children is also allowed to help with feeding the bees, their winter sugar syrup feed and I'm amazed how involved they are. When we finally go inside to do the interview I'm grateful and amazed Glen and his family provide me with lunch." Extracts from field diary 28th September 2013

The emphasis on young families was evident in the layout of Hempsalls described in the previous section, where a separate space is set aside for children so that parents with young families can get on with their work commitment. This was also reflected in interviews carried out although there were families with older children and retirees who were members the majority were young families.

"Yeah, we've got a lot of kids, yeah I mean our average family is probably a couple in their thirties with two or three primary school age kids, probably she's at home, probably he works in IT and that would be our mean family although we do have others…I mean Cambridge is full of hi-tech jobs, but most of our members, yeah probably the vast majority of our members work in Cambridge probably easily 50% of them, probably 75 % of them are in software or bio-tech or something that you think of when you think of you know they're kind of technology clusters around Cambridge." 2-CSA-HF-Dir

The concentration of employment of the members in well paid research and hi-tech jobs around Cambridge was supported by the demographic data collected earnings were not below the 22-30k bracket. It should be noted that only a small number of people returned demographic data via interview or survey, but that the membership of both CSAs, particularly Hempsalls was also small.

Data on family composition was also not collected as part of the survey, so it is difficult to be definitive. At Oak Tree though there seemed to be less of a focus on families and whilst there were many families involved in the CSA it did not seem to dominate the membership in the same way as Hempsalls. Unlike Hempsalls the income spread was much wider although this may be down to the larger amount of retired members there were also a number of members on lower incomes who weren't retired in comparison to Hempsalls. The members of the Oak Tree at least judged by income didn't conform to the middle class stereotype of local food. However when looking at education the majority of those surveyed or interviewed at both Hempsalls and the Oak Tree held either a graduate or postgraduate degree, this is more in line with the stereotype. Interestingly both CSA's membership was to some extent reflective of their origins in that several of those who were part of the Oak Tree had some links to Transition Ipswich and or the Green party whereas at Hempsalls several members were involved with the local church. This is unsurprising really, given that the Oak Tree had its origins in discussions with such groups one would expect it to draw in members from this. Moreover the aims of the project fitted with a sustainable or 'green' political awareness.

> "A lot of people are very concerned about carbon emissions and generally things like pesticides in their food, um buying local food and food miles and issues like that, people err towards the ecological minded, got a lot of people who are in the green party." 1-CSA-OT-Dir

Similarly the community focus of Hempsalls was more likely to draw in people from the church community, particularly as its origins were with people active in that particular community.

> "we try and get there to be an element of community in everything we doin a sense we don't just come and work, um and it's always one of the things I remind myself and people come up and have a look around and you know, we always stop and chat have a drink, and no one ever leaves empty handed, people come even if it's just to have a look around, do something, if we've got some eggs, veg just keep that spirit of giving out, we gave away turkeys last year at Christmas, went round the local church and said look if anybody is struggling have a turkey um, we're lucky to be able to help some families in the village and that's really important to me that we keep that sort of stuff going." 2-CSA-HF-Dir

To suggest the membership was shaped by the aims of the projects and its initiators would be an over simplification, but both appeared to have been influenced by this. It is likely also that being able to

draw on existing social networks in the early days of each CSA was crucial to their success so there is likely to be a legacy of this observed in the current membership particularly given how recently both had been set up. The ethnicity of both CSAs was very narrow, with few people outside of the White British category involved, although members were quite diverse in their age. This wasn't particularly well captured by the demographic data because it only collected information about the individual who filled it in, not their family group but CSA shares were received and used by the family and different family members often contributed to the work. So although there appears to be a lack of young people involved, there were actually quite a few although there relatively few in the teenage to young adult group at either CSA.

The Community Gardens

4.6 Origins and History

Both CGs have health or well-being as a much more explicit focus than the CSAs described above. The Peoples Community Garden (hereon referred to as the PCG) was initially set up to address inequalities within Ipswich as part of the Town and Bridge project initiated in 2006, under the remit of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)[24]. The PCG itself was established in 2008 as part of this wider project to reduce the gap in health and social outcomes between the most deprived and least deprived populations of Ipswich. This original project became what is now a charity called ActivLives and the PCG falls within that as one of the two ActivGardens spaces that it runs. The current aims of the project are in line with the original intention to improve well-being through the garden.

> "The aims really were to improve, the basic in a nutshell it was to improve people's health and well-being through gardening and growing their own food - that was it really." 11-CG-PCG-Dir

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[24] Local Strategic Partnerships or LSPs were a government initiative which sought to bring together multiple agencies from the public, private and third sector to encourage joint working in the interests of local communities (Geddes, Davies & Fuller, 2007).
https://web.archive.org/web/20081224215849/http://www.neighbourhood.gov.uk:80/page.asp?id=531

Similarly the Big Garden Project was set up as a result of Heritage Lottery Funding in 2006 although this did have more of an environmental focus improving health and well-being was also a key aim.

> "So initially it was set up because of this interest in sustainable food growing and trying to provide an opportunity for local people to learn about that and to in turn obviously be inspired to eat more healthily and so on, but also in terms of the heritage aspect of it so looking at different types of vegetable and seed that were heritage and heirloom varieties, hence also the community orchard which is planted with predominantly heritage trees…There was an awareness of the therapeutic benefits of being outdoors and gardening and food growing and obviously healthy eating and basically all of those things combined really so I think the aims were fairly threefold at the time." 20-CG-BG-Dir

The quote above also indicates an ambition to embed learning into the aims of the project, in encouraging healthy eating habits but also more generally in growing skills. This was also the case with the PCG as it particularly aimed at helping those most disadvantaged groups. There was a natural overlap in that those in poorer wards within Ipswich were more likely to be unemployed, including the electoral ward where the PCG is located[25]. Because of this, a focus on training naturally developed but the project could also meet other needs of people who were long term unemployed

> "…the project very quickly became much more than just being about health and well-being because it can offer so much more and one of the key things it could offer was training people in new skills, skills for work and because areas of disadvantage coincide with areas of high unemployment we found that a lot of the people who approached us were people who needed something to do in the day or they'd been made unemployed after a long period of time or they'd never worked or they were twiddling their thumbs at home isolated in their little flats on their own not seeing anybody or getting contacts for work, so it became more than just physical activity and health diet it was health in terms of mental health and social contacts, I mean that's not necessarily to say people had mental health problems, but we all need social contact don't we and for me that's the single most important thing at both garden projects is giving people the opportunity to interact with other people and work as a team and make friends and develop support systems." 11-CG-PCG-Dir

So both projects had a range of aims which were focussed on improving people's well-being, whether that was more directly through encouraging physical activity or improving diet or through social contact and training offered in the CGs. The production of food within the garden was key in achieving

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[25] Long term unemployment (JSA claimant rate) is 2.5 times the national average – 2.5% vs 1% and significantly higher than Ipswich average 1.5% Source: Public Health England, ONS,NOMIS, DofE. It is also one of the more deprived wards in Ipswich see health profile www.localhealth.org.uk [accessed 10/08/16]

these aims because it provided the context and means by which these aims could be achieved. In comparison with the CSA where the production of food was arguably more important than the well-being outcomes it could provide although it's difficult to separate out these aspects since all the CFOs seem to have been set up with a view that gardening or growing food and well-being are to some extent mutually constituted. That said it will be clear from chapters 1 and 2 that the well-being benefits of growing food are very much contingent on the nature of its production.

4.7 Physical space and location

Both CG sites could be considered relatively isolated although both are located in a major town of a similar size, the PCG in Ipswich and the Big Garden in Colchester. The Big Garden is located in a country park, so although the location might be described as urban in that it is in a town, it is far from built up and the garden site itself is actually former farm land. People visit the country park for many reasons, and you're fairly unlikely to stumble across the Big Garden which means that those visiting it must make a purposeful effort to find it, although those walking or using the wider park may chance upon it, or follow signs to it. It is situated not far from the park's main visitor centre the main entrance being reached via a short walk through some of the mature woodland of the park. As you enter the gate this gives way to the Big garden's open site, rough grassland planted with a mixture of local varieties of fruit trees forms a ring around the main vegetable growing area, A local beekeeper has set up an apiary amongst the trees for pollination and honey. Along the main path tarmac is being encroached upon by weeds and herbs, rosemary and sage grow in front of a large covered shelter which a grape vine scrambles over. Inside is a large table and seating area where tea breaks take place and opposite is a small area of raised beds where more herbs are growing. Two polytunnels bearing the scars of vandals' knives, provide growing space for seedlings and tender plants. Productive vegetable beds are interspersed with paths of woodchip to allow easy access for tending the plants and weeding. A large shipping container houses tools and equipment for volunteers, as well as stored vegetables such as hanging bunches of garlic. Several compost bins are used to recycle weeds and spent plants although

most are often out of action in the summer when they provide a refuge for grass snakes. A pond on the edge of the growing area also provides interest for wildlife and visitors and a recently installed composting toilet sits next to the shipping container.

The PCG is positioned on the Maidenhall allotment site in Ipswich, which lie south of the town centre next to the railway line between Norwich and London. You can enter the site through either of the main allotment gates but you need a key, the garden also has its own small gate through the boundary hedge, which is accessible when the garden is open. Stepping through this gate you enter what's called the sensory garden, the planting changes regularly and can include tall swaying grasses to caress the hand although they also provide visual impact they can be enjoyed without sight. Other perennials and flowering annuals make up the beds in this part of the garden and the air can be heavy with scent in mid- summer. Two polytunnels provide important growing space for tender crops including less common varieties, for example a small space in one provides unusual vegetables for a Bangladeshi community. More vegetable growing space lies beyond these including the 'patchwork plots' for people to tend their own mini allotment. Further down the garden, towards the railway lines is a small area of edible and flowering perennials including several fruit trees and bushes which make up the forest garden. This gives way to a wildlife area of the garden in which a willow tunnel snakes its way between the forest garden and an area for wildflowers. The main meeting space of the garden is adjacent to the sensory garden and a small office and shipping container which houses the gardens tools. In the office building there is indoor space to accommodate volunteers and visitors when the weather is less than favourable and a small stove and sink. Opposite this is a composting toilet next to a spiral of herbs and a clay oven that is fired up sporadically for events at the garden. The space is made up of several allotment plots joined together and has expanded since it was established, despite apparent wider demand for allotments the Maidenhall site remains underutilized.

Both sites are not particularly accessible in that they are not situated centrally in either town or adjacent to busy thoroughfares. However the more 'rural' setting of the Big Garden was important in

shaping the opportunity and experience of outdoors or nature and being located within the country park meant certain work tasks or activities were available that wouldn't otherwise have been.

> "Being outdoors on our particular site, I mean there's lots of interest, in terms of wildlife, we'll see a fox or a deer at the fence we'll certainly look at birds and the views across Colchester are quite interesting and changing and amazing and then obviously you're hearing bird song and so on and feeling the sun and the wind and all that kind of stuff in a different way, so certainly there's be elements if you simply switched it to an indoors project and you just grew in polytunnels there's be elements of satisfaction still there I'm sure; growing food, taking food away certain tasks that you could still enjoy but I guess cos we have a wide variety of tasks including going into the woods and raking leaves in the winter or going out to the woods and coppicing and bringing the coppiced material back and snedding[26] it and we have bonfires um I think a lot of people do enjoy they seem to enjoy the outdoorsiness of it." 20-CG-BG-Dir

In the case of both sites the location will have been partly determined by the availability of land, it's unlikely for land in more central locations to be made available to community gardens given its potential value for other uses. Whereas in the case of the PCG the allotment site where it is sited is large and there certainly were a number of vacant plots when the garden was created and there remains unused allotment land on the site. Similarly the location of the Big Garden within the country park was straightforward as it was land already owned by the local authority and became available when a tenancy arrangement to farm the site ended. The siting of the PCG was also influenced by the aims of the project to offer services to those living in more deprived areas of the town. The PCG is more urban than the Big Garden as it is bordered by the main train line to London and the buildings of the docks and residential dwellings are readily apparent. However the allotment site itself is a large expanse of green space flanked by playing fields but appears altogether more managed than the country park surroundings of the Big Garden. The position of the sites does have an impact on what people get out of their involvement, but who engages with the space also depends on how accessible it is to them.

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[26] Snedding is the process of stripping the side shoots and buds from the length of a branch or shoot, often coppiced material such as hazel or willow, in preparation for its use as fencing, for example.

4.7 Organisational structure

As I noted above the PCG which had initially been set up via the LSP as part of a wider project, which is now established as a charity. The Big Garden was funded via public health money but the town Borough Council also supported the project, for example they owned the site it was located on.

> "We're funded by, we're funded with sort of public health money um so obviously we're still hosted by the borough council who input to some degree in terms of provision of office space and in terms of supervision of staff and provision of uniforms or whatever and the site obviously belongs to the Borough Council" 20-CG-BG-Dir

The different funding structures were important in defining not only the structure of the organisations but also the activities undertaken at the project. The PCG having a charitable status was somewhat more independent, giving it more freedom to shape its activities although its continuation depended on charitable donations and bidding for funding opportunities, which in turn influenced the project.

> "…because we're always scraping around for funds, I'm sorry to say it, you basically have to twist and turn to fit whatever is the current funding stream, which isn't hard because the garden has a lot of scope but I think it is one of the problems we have in defining what we do have to offer." 11-CG-PCG-Dir

In contrast the Big Garden was funded via public health to offer services, which were more closely defined.

> "…the funding for the last four years has come from the public health budget so essentially we offer two things, we offer funding for anybody to come to be a volunteer, they register with the project they can come as often or as little as they want to, so they're people who might come once a week or twice a week if they're inspired or once a fortnight as much as they want to and the other strand is that we offer a service to, well for service users so we have a health referral system so a health professional can refer a service user who should be an adult with either mental health support needs or learning disabilities." 20-CG-BG-Dir

The Big Garden might seem to have a more stable funding stream, but there was a good deal of uncertainty about the future of the project. This not surprising given the wider climate of austerity in public funding in the UK which prioritises services which are deemed essential and puts pressure on all publicly funded services to demonstrate value for money. Both CG sites were open to the public when they were open, but both also provided more structured placements as a result of their respective funding streams. Theoretically this creates a differentiation between 'service users' and

'volunteers' and their interaction with the project although this distinction was not pronounced in either site, as will be evident from the following sections.

Both CGs seem to have been established with a public health focus and had initially been funded via some health and or local authority money, although grant funding also contributed to their establishment and continuation. The key difference in terms of structure is that the PCG had charitable status and was also part of a larger organisation than the Big Garden. Notionally part of the wider public health service provided in the locality it was clear the project was not established on a permanent footing[27].

4.8 Organisation of work and activities

The way in which activities were structured and determined were defined by the aims of the project and need to provide services to the users and volunteers of the garden. Both sites were publicly accessible but people wanting to volunteer needed to register by completing a form capturing basic information as a health and safety requirement. There was no expectation that you had to volunteer in order to spend time in the garden but most people at both CGs were either volunteers or on some kind of placement. The relatively small number of people visiting either CG site who didn't fit into those categories, might wander round but did not tend to stay long, in my experience. The exception to this was the larger public events which both CGs hosted from time to time which were an opportunity to showcase the gardens and often raised some funds. One reflection from the fieldwork is that 'ordinary members of the public' who passed through seemed to be unsure of how to engage with the space and people within it outside of the public events.

> "What's interesting is that during the time I was there several people wandered through the space but didn't interact with the staff/volunteers that were there and I wondered why. Possibly people just wanted to be in the space without interacting with it or the people there, but also I don't think people were familiar with the 'rules of engagement'." Extract from field diary 29th July 2014

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[27] Note according to the Big Garden's website its current funding (until September 2017) is provided from the Borough Council as part of the New Homes Bonus not through public health, illustrating the uncertainty and shifting nature of funding.

This uncertainty is perhaps unsurprising given that public spaces which are most akin to the CGs are probably parks, where users are not expected to actively engage with others in the space. However a lack of engagement stood out to me because the volunteers and service users also in the space were actively engaged with each other and the work so the passivity of other visitors was emphasized in comparison.

At the Big Garden the structure of activity was clearly defined, the garden was open 10-13:00 Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and alternate Saturdays and each session followed a familiar routine. Everyone would gather at the start of the session to decide which jobs they wanted to do from a list defined by one of the two part time staff (whichever was working on that day) and then set about these. There was a regular break scheduled as part of the work session about half way through and then the work would continue until about 12.30pm when vegetables were harvested and shared out. In terms of the work there was a wide range of activities centred on food growing, but other maintenance and sometimes jobs in the surrounding country park where the Big Garden was located. Users of the garden emphasized the importance of being able to choose tasks suited to their abilities and needs and this was also understood by staff.

> "There's not always a vast array of tasks, I mean it might be that at the beginning of a session well actually there's these two things we really need to do today, so kind of could you chose what you prefer and in fact very often we'll if that is the case and there is very limited choice, I think it's important that people still have some choice because they arrive in different states of being and they might feel they want to go and do something very physical or something a bit more, more gentle or whatever, quite often people will say I just don't mind what I do, tell me what to do and I'll do it" 20-CG-BG-Dir

The regular break time that was scheduled was important in providing people with refreshment, and a rest from whatever work activity they were doing but also important for social opportunity to chat, although it was up to individuals to what extent they wanted to socialise with others.

> "I mean obviously it's a practical thing to do to provide someone with a hot cup of tea, however we're working we always try and break as a group even if people have arrived on site randomly or whatever we try and say well look tea break is at 11.30 or whatever that's when we're all gonna sit together and have tea, and then yeah it's a very conscious effort to try and provide that opportunity and clearly for some people they want to go away and be a bit on their own they can go and take

their tea and sit somewhere else or whatever and yeah often that's a very important time for people to chat and it might be chat about gardening and food and vegetables and often issues come up around that kind of subject area...or it might be completely unrelated stuff but it's a very important part of the morning I would say yeah." 20-CG-BG-Dir

Clearly then there is some overlap here with the CSAs in that people collectively work on producing food which is then shared out amongst themselves. Although because this element is less structured or formalised than in CSA people were more hesitant about taking home their share of the harvest. This was even truer at the PCG where activities also seemed to conform to a less structured routine. The PCG was also predominantly open during the week, its usual opening hours were Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9.30am-4pm, only being open outside these times for particular events or training courses. Neither CG was set up with the explicit aim of being productive but rather an awareness that the activity of engaging people in food production could be beneficial in a number of ways so this guided how activities were defined. At the PCG there was a real emphasis on providing training opportunities aimed at people who weren't in work.

> "...in the garden we offer volunteering opportunities to all the groups that I've mentioned we run courses in gardening and horticulture and related topics, we've done pond building, bee keeping and so on so we offer skills training, last year we ran a scheme called garden gate which was all about training people a long way from the job market or perhaps people who would never be able to get a job because of their disabilities or whatever in horticulture and confidence building and we teamed up with Realise Futures to run courses in interview skills C.V. writing that sort of thing."
> 11-CG-PCG-Dir

The reasons why people had come to the garden tended to be what defined how they engaged with it and the activities they undertook. So that someone on a structured placement might follow a particular routine for a number of weeks, which would depend on the kind of placement, whereas volunteers could opt to be more selective in how they engaged with the project, although those on placements also had latitude in defining this. There was therefore more distinction at the PCG between how different groups using the garden engaged in different activities in comparison to the Big Garden where there was more of a structure which all users of the garden followed regardless of what had got them involved with the project.

"I feel the people's community garden provides a unique environment... and I think that's good it's responded to the needs of the community rather than the other way round, you know us telling people what they need I mean we provided literally almost a blank canvas and people can access it in their own way at whatever level they want or whatever way they want, so I think it is unique." 11-CG-PCG-Dir

As I noted above both CGs were guided by the aims to support the well-being of the people that engaged with them and not so much by the need to produce food although this was how these aims were realised. The production of food therefore remained important particularly to structuring the space and the activities of the project but it also to some extent remained its raison d'être and gave those volunteers producing it a sense of purpose and achievement.

"...we've established a core of tried and tested volunteers who can virtually run the place on their own now, but they want to know what they're growing has some purpose to it, I mean what's the point of growing all these vegetables if they're going to be left to rot or nobody's eating them or we're not getting any money for them... but they feel like they're coming there to sort of contribute to a joint effort of producing vegetables for people to eat." 11-CG-PCG-Dir

"I mean certainly for a lot of volunteers taking away a bag of veg at the end of the morning gives them a real, obviously it's a way of saying thank you to them but they get a real joy out of that, and I think the connection with having been involved in producing those vegetables is quite tangible." 20-CG-BG-Dir

At both projects people were entitled and encouraged to take home a share of the produce that their work had contributed to but tended to take home relatively little or take nothing. The precise reasons for this are not clear but it is obvious that the structure of the CG projects does not create the same entitlement as CSA where people are committed to work and payment in exchange for food. However the more explicitly structured nature of sessions at Big Garden did seem to encourage more people to take away more food than at the PCG.

Whilst CGs did not have the regular work commitment expected of CSA members, people could come very regularly if they wanted to and some did. This has implications for how social interaction or a sense of community might be built up through involvement at the CGs. Just as the working days were a focal point for social interaction at the CSA schemes social relationships within the CGs might centre on the particular day that individuals regularly visited on.

"we both feel that every session we're open is like a little mini community anyway and those volunteers and the referrals all work together and people get a strong sense of identification with that session...some people have just got busy lives and that's the only slot in the week they can do but I think people also build a sense of connection with other regulars on those mornings, so each sessions like a mini sort of community." 20-CG-BG-Dir

So although the CGs lacked the work commitment element of CSAs which theoretically brought people to the project on a regular basis often people did come regularly anyway either through a placement or as a volunteer they chose to make their involvement a routine. The physical space and location of both CGs was also important in determining the activities that took place and how accessible they were to different people.

4.10 Participants

The surveys did not collect data on where people involved with the projects lived. However it was evident from the fieldwork that many of the volunteers at the PCG were quite local to it whereas this was less true at the Big Garden which wasn't positioned in the midst of residential housing like the PCG. The hours when the CGs were open also played a big role in determining who accessed them, given that they were predominantly open during the week within the timeframe of the average working day.

"You have a few people that are retired and then you have a few people that are jobless for some reason and like once I saw a student a bit like myself, cos obviously you're not going to meet someone who's working a nine to five job on a Wednesday morning at the project." 18-CG-BG

It is not surprising then that none of the CFO participants surveyed at either site described themselves as employed, although it should be noted that I wasn't able to collect data on any of the Saturdays when the Big Garden was open. Although both CG's participants have a non-working status, more of those surveyed at the PCG described themselves as unemployed whereas at the Big Garden there were an equal number of people describing themselves as retired or unable to work. Again this is perhaps unsurprising given the location of the PCG and the various schemes which they ran for unemployed people who sometimes remained involved as a volunteers after their placement finished. Equally given that many of those using the Big Garden were referred on health grounds one would

expect a higher proportion to report being unable to work, here also people initially referred continued in a volunteering capacity in some instances.

> "I think in terms of numbers I think in the last couple of years I think we might have had possibly half a dozen people move into volunteering (from initially being a health referral)" 20-CG-BG-Dir

As might be expected from the employment status of those surveyed at both CGs their income and educational qualifications were lower than those at CSAs although there was little difference in terms of ethnicity and age. In terms of the status of participants at the CGs there seemed to be a fairly clear distinction between those who were volunteers and those who were 'service users' who had been referred to the garden. In practice though it was quite difficult to distinguish between these groups and as I have already pointed out several of those who had been referred originally remained as volunteers.

> "Certainly there's no differentiation on sight, everyone is treated equally, people might or might not be aware of their different status in terms of whether they're a volunteer or a health referral and that might become apparent and people are often very open about that" 20-CG-BG-Dir

> "I know the garden offers garden therapy, adult therapy to people with some mental health issues, but the interesting thing is I don't know who's who we're all just volunteers, well as far as I know and that's made, introductions are just first name basis and the rest is up to us to tell each other about ourselves as much or as little we want to which is lovely I think it's really well integrated." 19-CG-BG

As stated above the activities for different users of the garden were not explicitly differentiated neither of the sites were completely divided according to their use for different groups. Although some elements of the PCG were maintained by individuals or a group, such as the 'patchwork plots' but the vast majority of it was collectively maintained. At the Big Garden there was no division of the site according to use by particular groups, it was all considered communal.

> "we provide a supported placement for three months initially which is often then extended to six months...and essentially everyone is on site together, it's a communal effort we don't divide the site into plots and give individuals their own space we work together communally and obviously in the garden share the produce... we're also open to members of the public...also accommodate visiting school groups" 20-CG-BG-Dir

At the PCG there was a distinction like at Big Garden in that there were volunteers and people on more structured placements who might be described as service users. There was also an informal separation

within the group of volunteers a core group known as 'special branch' that had been coming for many years and had undertaken some training that meant they could effectively run the project like staff as and when needed. Then there were more peripheral volunteers who might come less often or come for a period of time and then drift away again and didn't take on any particular responsibilities. The other distinction to note between the two sites was that there was more variety in terms of the placements offered by the PCG, so that this might be skills or training related or therapeutic. Whereas referrals to the Big Garden only came via health professionals, the Big Garden also had some long standing volunteers but during the field work it wasn't obvious that the same informal distinction between core and peripheral volunteers existed.

4.11 Conclusion

The structure of both CSAs was quite similar, the most notable differences being the work commitment – which was greater for the Oak Tree – and scale – again the Oak Tree was bigger. This difference has potential implications for social connections and how work was experienced on the farm. All CSA members were committed for a year and this facilitated interaction with other CSA members who were expected to work regularly. The larger scale of the Oak Tree may have meant that building social connections through the CSA came less easily.

> "so there's lots of people involved with it and your immediate kind of knowledge of everyone is quite limited cos you only meet people as and when and there's no consistency so you might have met a couple of people and then you never see them again or um you know there's new people every time, but everyone's a bit like that so everyone is, you know everyone is very friendly and happy" 13-CSA-OT

Some of the more long term members did reflect on how the increased membership had reduced familiarity with members. Equally though the greater commitment that was required by members of the Oak Tree might be expected to produce a more harmonious membership, particularly given the reduced membership options in comparison to Hempsalls. This level of commitment could of course also be due to how politically interested in the CSA members were. As will become apparent in

subsequent chapters pretty much all CFO participants expressed negative views towards conventional food provision, which is to be expected, but the sense that being involved in CSA was a political action was more limited. This was though more prominent at the Oak Tree, where the political nature of participation seemed to be more 'active' as expressed in farm blog posts and email newsletters, but also in conversation at the farm.

"Um, well the people that get involved who it works for are people who really want, I think (stressing I think i.e. her opinion) want to do something for the local food economy and want to do something for the environment I believe and are interested in the quality of their food and are interested in being on the land, that's quite a long list actually isn't it, it's like they care about their food and they get something out of being in the open air among other people and they feel like, I think they feel like they're part of a bigger thing, I hope so I do, I think we are" 1-CSA-OT-Dir

As noted earlier the aims and origins of the Oak Tree CSA were more rooted in environmental political views and action although that is not to say the project did not achieve the social and community aims that were the focus of Hempsalls.

"Um the aim was to produce food in a low carbon way, having a good time whilst doing so and it being economically viable, rough transcription of what the aim was, it wasn't written down, that was the aim initially it's slightly changed since...the community to my mind is a way of making the sustainable stuff work, it's a lovely side effect, it's not just me anymore other people are involved, for some people that connection, the community is the purpose of it, to me that is the key, it's labour intensive doing the low carbon farming and people just want to get involved and the two just match and that was the bit I hadn't realised until all that happened and you just think this is extraordinary, sometimes I just stand back and look at it and think this is really incredible, cos everybody thinks it's not viable doing this sort of stuff and I think it could be" 1-CSA-OT-Dir

Likewise although Hempsalls was more community focussed it was by no means apolitical and undertook production with the sensitivity to the environment and welfare.

"To a large extent that was welfare as well cos it's something you don't have a lot of control over… in a way that I care slightly less about mistreating cabbages by spraying them with chemicals and I care slightly more about mistreating pigs by sticking them in tiny little pens um and keeping them indoors and so that was a big thing for us, because there really was no way to do that. You can buy organic veg but growing sort of traditionally reared low intensive livestock is incredibly hard to find um…Yeah I think we can grow and everyone can see how they're grown…cos you go to the butcher and they'll know which farm their meat's come from but you can't really see how it's grown and where it's come from cos even a lot of the you know outdoor pig units, they still spend an awful lot of time indoors then are finished very briefly outdoors to get the label, um and there's something about seeing is believing I think um that's very powerful for that where people have seen through the whole process, how they're kept, what they're fed on." 2-CSA-HF-Dir

Another similarity in structure between the two sites was the lack of formality, neither conformed to a formal co-operative structure although the agreement constituted in the CSA share although time limited could be seen as such. The lack of formalised structure might be thought to have an implication on the extent to which people engage with the project or feel that they are part of it, in reality though this wasn't the case. The quote below shows a lack of concern about formalising members' role in the CSA beyond the share itself and this was borne out in the interview data although one or two people did articulate some minor concern.

> "I did early on say to people if they wanted to form a more formal structure whilst I was self-employed and make it more of a membership thing they were welcome to come up with an idea and nobody responded, no one was interested. people seemed to be quite happy for me to organise it so I don't think there is that burning desire to be formally involved in it and I've heard of other CSAs that have put that to people and there's not been a lot of enthusiasm" 1-CSA-OT-Dir

There are a number of parallels between the two CGs, both had similar aims and means they used to achieve these; offering opportunities for people to get involved with food growing as a way of benefitting their well-being. A key distinction is the greater variety of schemes run at the PCG in comparison to the Big Garden which accommodated health referrals and volunteers. Both CGs also had their roots in public health services although they were somewhat independent from this, particularly the PCG, another distinction being the organisational structure of the two CGs. The PCG has established itself as part of an independent charity this status contributed to the greater diversity of schemes operated there, a result of greater independence but also need to be competitive in winning funding from multiple sources and delivering services accordingly. The CGs primarily delivered services for health and well-being, food production although important in facilitating this could be considered secondary. The participants of each CG were divided in a similar way, between volunteers and service users, there was a further division between core and peripheral volunteers at both sites although this was more pronounced at the PCG. Although these different identities are important in influencing the benefits different people derive from their involvement and their experience of it the distinctions between different groups were not explicit. Neither of the CGs were particularly accessible to people in full time employment, and consequently the users tended not to be working with a higher

proportion of those at the Big Garden unable to work. The PCG is situated in an area of relatively high unemployment, and this combined with its aim to provide services in response to the local community's needs seems to have embedded it more in the community. In comparison the Big Garden is more isolated, it's location in a country park means that it is somewhat removed from the residential community. The country park itself had a number of volunteers and there was some overlap between those volunteering at the Big Garden, so this in a sense was a community that it drew members from.

The lack of employment amongst CG participants in comparison with the CSA members means that we might expect the work activities and the sense of agency and purpose associated with them to be more meaningful for CG participants. Agency and the experience of work was a major theme of the data which I address in chapter 7 and although it is considered important by CG participants, CSA participants also derive well-being from this. The reference point for CSA members tends to be different in that they typically compare their work experiences at the CFO with less rewarding forms of paid work although it should also be noted that in all four research sites there was a significant number of retired people. The opportunity to be involved in the production of food at the CFOs was meaningful as a form of labour for different reasons and in different ways and this was shaped in part by individual's current and past experience of other forms of labour.

Although you didn't have the same distinction between volunteers and service users at CSA – everyone (excluding staff) was a member – there was perhaps a difference between those more committed members and other members. This differentiation wasn't clear or explicit but some members might spend more time at the CFO and exceed their work commitment whereas others might struggle to meet it. Also the level of involvement for members was largely determined by their interest and availability, this is likely to impact on how individual's experience of the CFO was shaped and in turn how it impacted on their well-being. In comparing the two types of project what should also be noted is the distinction between community 'gardening' and community 'agriculture', the latter is suggestive of a much greater focus on productivity, whereas the former implies more of a

leisure activity. In reality both constituted work, which was often physically demanding and at all sites there was a sense that people were contributing to a joint effort.

> "In a garden it's really back breaking work sometimes and you see people sort of mud splattered and knackered at the end of the day so they want to know what they're doing has a purpose and it's making a difference" 11-CG-PCG-Dir

Interest in producing your own food or connecting to it more closely was more likely to bring people into CSA, although they might also be motivated by other aspects such as opportunities to make friends or physical exercise. At the CGs this wasn't so much the case people entered into placements because of a particular need whether that was training or therapeutic or they volunteered because they wanted to learn, make friends or contribute to the project and generally not because they wanted to source their food from there. Although people did take food home in recognition for their work contribution this was seen as more of a bonus rather than fundamental to their involvement. Participation in the CSA then tended to be more politically motivated by a desire to react against or reject elements of the conventional food system. It also required more commitment in that involvement was more formalised through the 'working share' of the CSA whereas CG participants' involvement was more ad hoc.

Although the CSAs didn't have the explicit well-being focus of the CGs production and the activities of the CSA were still guided by a consideration of well-being. The intention was to produce food which didn't damage the environment and but also relied on building positive social relationships to make the small scale model of collective production a success. All four organisations actually engaged people in a mode of food production that elevated well-being as an organising principle even though they placed different emphasis on different aspects of well-being for different reasons. Ultimately though the benefits in terms of well-being were difficult to separate out from the way in which activities centred on food production were constituted within the CFOs.

"…and for volunteers I guess the biggest impact, yeah that's hard it is really hard to pin in down to one thing really...and I think the outdoorsy thing, the outdoorsy food growing thing meshed together is important but the social thing's there as well...they might grow some veg and take some veg away but it's sort of doing that in connection with other people um which sort of makes it what it is really, so it's hard to separate it out." 20-CG-BG-Dir.

"I mean there is something fundamental about connecting with the outside environment and being in nature isn't there and being in the earth and all those wonderful sort of things that move you so I think that attracts people." 11-CG-PCG-Dir

In the next three chapters I explore the experience of involvement in food production in CFOs through the dominant themes in the data. The first of these explores the way in which participants' relationship with nature was affected by their involvement. I begin with this theme because it has received significant attention in the literature, as observed in chapter 2. Although local and alternative food has typically been understood as re-connecting people to nature, the reality of the experience of CFOs is more complex than this, as chapter 5 reveals.

Chapter 5 – Redefining relationships with nature

"…there is a growing body of evidence that a relationship with nature is not just a pleasant addition or a preference one might choose to explore, but an essential component of human well-being." (Brook, 2010; p. 298)

Introduction

The labour process has been core to Marxian discourse, understandably since this was a central focus for Marx himself. Through the concept of alienation Marx highlighted the way in which labour and the capitalist relations of production also alienate human beings from nature. The damaging consequences of this alienation have received a considerable amount of attention in terms of the way in which capitalist production damages nature. Although an essential component of the conditions of production, the way in which nature is treated as an external resource to be exploited has undermined the conditions of production. What has been given much less attention in Marxist literature is the well-being consequences of this disconnection at an individual level. The damaging experience of alienation from nature has become an accepted if not acceptable feature of modern life (Kaufman in Schacht, 1971, p. xx). The theme of reconnection to nature through alternative and local food is prevalent and one that I have already highlighted in the earlier discussion of the literature on alternative and local food. Proponents argue that this desire to 'reconnect' is driving increased interest in local foods (Morris & Kirwan, 2010; Murdoch & Miele, 1999) and that the possibility of reconnecting via food has various benefits (Dowler et al., 2009; Pretty, 2007). To speak of connection or re-connection with nature conflicts with the conception of alienation I have sketched out, since in this

view humanity cannot be separated from nature. In linguistic terms it might be convenient to speak of connection or re-connection but in reality it is not possible to separate humans from nature as Marx highlights. To talk of disconnection or reconnection invokes a dualism that is ignorant of the inseparable relationship between humans and nature. For Marx labour was the central process in annotating human's relationship with nature, not that this is restricted to capitalist labour although it is equally a feature of it, regardless of the way alienated labour tends to obscure this relationship.

"Labour is, in the first place, a process in which both man and Nature participate, and in which man of his own accord starts, regulates, and controls the material re-actions between himself and Nature." (Marx, capital, p. 283)

In this chapter I explore how the experience of participating in the CFOS enables people to define or redefine their relationship with nature as opposed to connection which is evocative of a false binary.[28]

5.1 Being in Nature

There is now a wealth of literature on the well-being benefits of interaction with nature and green exercise (Barton & Pretty, 2010; Haybron, 2011; Kaplan, 2007; van den Berg et al., 2010). This evidence says that being in nature can have a positive effect on our mood suggesting even a passive experience or appreciation of nature might be beneficial. This straightforward interpretation of the benefits of time spent outdoors was picked up by many participants in CFOs as self-evident.

> "Yeah I, I kind of I think it just makes you feel good I think. Um I don't cos if you sit indoors and you look at the four blank walls that are in front and the TV, I know some people are into TV and computers and all that. Uh for me I don't enjoy that or sitting on the internet I'm afraid I'm not into all that. I mean for me coming out as long as it's not raining, um I think it just makes you feel good, feel well and I think you get oxygenated, and you go away and then you have a good night's sleep and yeah I think that's the thing" 4-CG-BG

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[28] Jason Moore has argued forcefully that although capitalism exhibits a tendency to treat nature as some sort of separate resource to be plundered, when it is actually an ecological regime:
"When I say that capitalism is an ecological regime, I am saying that capitalism is a world-historical matrix that knits together humans with the rest of nature in specific ways, above all operating within a gravitational field of endless accumulation." (Moore, 2010, p. 3)

As can be seen from the above quote, the way in which the CFOs enabled this kind of experience was considered to create a positive mood. CG participants seemed to make the connection between mood and their time spent outdoors in the garden more explicitly than CSA participants who also identified the interaction with nature through food growing as important but in a more active sense. What they distinguished as important much more frequently was the way in which participation constituted a more active engagement with the natural environment. This is captured well in the following quote from a CSA member who compares their enjoyment of a favoured local park with the CSA farm:

> "Holywells park like I absolutely love, I spend a lot of time in it you know…but we have very little input and very little responsibility. Whereas, with the farm yeah I guess kind of it's exciting cos you feel part of quite a small group that are involved in this piece of land. Yeah and in terms of like the wildlife and what's growing and the updates [referring to regular emails] and what you see that's happening there, it's very like, what's the word, kind of two way…Whereas in the park you're like oh the daffodils are out but you don't know what's in season or what's dying of potato blight. It's kind of like quite happy clappy oh they'll sort it out, it doesn't really affect you. Whereas at the farm you're kind of properly involved." 16a-CSA-OT

5.2 An active relationship with nature

The importance of this active relationship with nature is identified by Brook (2010). It should be acknowledged that such a dynamic relationship moves us away from more romantic notions of the wild epitomized in works like Thoreau's *Walden* or *Life in the Woods* (Thoreau & Shanley, 2004)[29]. However interpretations of what we mean by nature will of course vary and the way in which I refer to nature in relation to CFOs is akin to Kaplan's conception of nearby nature (Kaplan & Austin, 2004; Kaplan, 1985) rather than wild or semi-wild reserves where purposeful action with nature tends to be discouraged in favour of passive appreciation. For some interviewees there was still a distinction between the nearby nature of their home and the more rural and agricultural setting of the project they were involved with but more removed from in a sense.

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[29] Although the writings of Thoreau captured a romantic vision of the wild and were connected to early initiatives to preserve wilderness spaces they also recorded the privations endured in his walks in the woods leading Thoreau to take more of a "middling position" between wild and domesticated landscapes (Baum, 1984).

> "I like being near the green plants, with here (home garden) I mean it's lovely, I've got flowers in the garden we have got some herbs in there, we've got a fig tree in there. But it's not green green and like the farm is often quite dry in the summer as well, but when you go in the polytunnel the whole thing is green and I just think ah. It reminds me of being in India going through rice fields seeing the green and feeling really, slightly nourished by the colour it's really good. So I like that and the squashes the other day I was weeding one of the squashes and you know you're right there, getting in there and I really love the colours." P1-CSA-OT

As expressed at the end of this quote the act of cultivating the land to grow food demands a much more active material relationship with the landscape. This dynamic process is in contrast with an experience of more pristine nature which is more removed, although potentially beneficial, it is so in different ways and not everyone necessarily has access to such natural environments. The lower end of the socio-economic spectrum more likely to find natural environments less accessible to them (Brook, 2010; p.299). Turner argues that urban planning approaches tend to favour a densification approach that constitutes a 'bracketing off of everyday lives from nature [and] contributes to the growing disconnect between urban consumers and the produce they buy and consume.' (Turner, 2011, p. 511). This highlights the need to retain access to nature through gardens and spaces like the CFO, which was highlighted by a number of interviewees, some actually identifying the explicit need to get beyond passive experience of nature:

> "We don't have any access to land um and um, and that gets back to the whole deficit and disconnect issue and that is an increasing problem for people. And therefore how do we get access to land other than walking through it in a twee way, how do we actually feel it and touch it, you know? And that's what I'm doing in those tasks that I'm doing and um therefore you know you either get yourself an allotment, which can be a bit of a headache potentially or you could try this. I'd say try this" 12-CSA-OT

Because the relationship to the land and the natural environment through participation was active rather than passive it was interconnected with the sense of agency people also reported. The experience of nature or natural elements was informed by the need to understand it in order to cultivate it. This understanding wasn't prefigured but emerged through interaction as the following quote about soil illustrates:

> "The ground is that is something that you need to, you get used to quite quickly after a year or so. Um that what, the tools you're gonna need sort of thing, the attitude you're gonna have to go about when you get to a certain season and how is the ground gonna be. Cos there's always digging and

whether it's harvesting potatoes, digging new fenceposts, hammering new fence post, planting various things uh just walking round in general. I mean in the winter it'll be soft underneath but it'll have a hard over layer. In the autumn it can get really awfully muddy, in the spring it can get quite damp and springy and that's why it's nice to plant everything then But in the summer everything dries down and turns into a desert and there's huge cracks in the floor" 9-CSA HF

5.3 Cultivating and embedding a sense of place

The combination of purposeful activity that shaped the landscape, primarily with the aim of growing food, also fed into a sense of place that people seemed to experience through their involvement. The concept of place recurs frequently in the literature (DeLind, 2002; Schnell, 2013; Trubek & Bowen, 2008; Urquhart & Acott, 2013), but is a difficult concept to unpack, whilst it goes beyond an affiliation via experiences of nature certainly this seems an important ingredient. The social connections people made via the projects were hugely important in rooting them there, as we will see in the next chapter, but the material elements constituted in the process of working in the space and interacting with it also grounded this sense of place.

> "I've got my own little bed down there and that wasn't my suggestion that was Kerry. Because how it all started was, we've got a purple hazel tree in the garden and I took down the, when we pruned it back I took the clippings from the garden down there to use/ help with the weaving. And I just made, my, round my own bed just made a very small fence you know weaved that round and then I brought a couple of other bits and pieces down and then Kerry said why don't you make this your bed and look after it, call it the Oakview bed. Which we did, so that in itself you do you feel that you've got part of the garden and you've also got part of your own garden at home down there and that's quite nice" 3-CG-BG

The opportunity projects offered for cultivating a relationship with nature was important and this was also emphasized for children. Children were not really present in community garden spaces aside from school trips and special events, but they were effectively members of CSAs if their family received a box. Whilst they could be a hindrance to people trying to get their work commitment done, and therefore a source of potential tension with other members, people generally regarded the CSA as important places for them to experience nature.

> "I like the idea, cos I grew up in a sort of rural area, sort of in Lincolnshire and we were always outside and so for me it was the, it was very appealing to be able to let the kids basically run loose outside and get dirty and climb trees and build dens and just mess about and stuff like that. And it was very

appealing for them as well, so the idea of this yeah playing about outside that was appealing" 7-CSA-HF

The role that nature plays delivering well-being both in the short term and long term by helping children develop has been the source of a good deal of attention both academically and in civil society. The term Nature Deficit Disorder (NDD) has been coined to identify this thoroughly modern problem and its damaging effects (Brook, 2010; Louv, 2005; Moss, 2012).

> "More recently you see um in the work of the national trust and RSPB are really majoring on that I think National Trust were using the term Nature Deficit Disorder which I don't think is an over statement. I mean obviously it isn't a psychological disorder as far as professional psychologists are concerned but I think it's an interesting term to use and it really gets to the nub of the matter I think, it is a really dysfunctional situation we're in and our children in particular." 12-CSA-OT

The lack of structure and safety in the CSA environment didn't seem to concern parents that were interviewed rather this was an important condition for the benefits their children might derive. This goes against the increasingly risk averse environment that society seems to provide for its children. There might be perceived short term benefits to educating children on 'stranger danger' but it also risks leaving them lacking the opportunity to develop in important ways which could negatively impact on their well-being (Brook, 2010; 304-5).

> "I love that it's a bit more dangerous like you know it's not exactly the safest place for them to be. [No yeah it looks like there's lots of hazards, doesn't it?] Yes and I like that because it totally feeds into their spirit and you know, yes they could get hurt, but the good I think outweighs the bad, in teaching them" 6-CSA-HF

Adult participants in the projects also related their own experience of nature in the CFOs to earlier childhood experiences, which seemed to be formative. This suggests that lacking the exposure to these kind of experiences in childhood may in fact determine the extent to which we're likely to engage in them in later life and pass on these values to our own children.

> "It is um I so I grew up in the country not on a farm or anything, but just open fields, it was the childhood where you just ran to your neighbours and you're out. Um not street traffic or stores or anything and so, there's something about it that's just uh freeing and you can really breathe, but then since I've been married, I've been in a city. Like city life um hardly a back yard, a garden nothing like that and so you can't even see the stars at night, so coming back here this kind of just brings me back a bit more to you know" 6-CSA-HF

However it wasn't necessary to have this kind of family background or childhood experience to enjoy a deeper relationship with nature through participation as illustrated by the following quote. This quote compares the experience with working life which although not regarded negatively does not create space for the interaction with nature that was being enjoyed through involvement at the community garden.

> "I spent forty four years of my life um commuting, working in offices pretty much uh. So for me it's been just quite an amazing experience and it's one and you think back I'm not saying I would maybe want to change what I did regarding work. But um, it's just you do feel that maybe if you did have the opportunity to do something like this during your working life then that might have improved things there, and given you a bit more incentive um…I think because it's so completely different and I think this what may be part of what the appeal was for me, um because we're, and you can imagine, you're stuck on a train for an hour plus and then you're in an office for eight hours. Alright you do get out and have some lunch. Um it's just that way of life you just get so used to it and this is what I was saying earlier and you don't really think beyond that, when you're working and you're doing all those hours um so it is a very big difference" 3-CG-BG

The relationship with nature experienced through the community garden comes more as a revelation in this case rather than an affirmation of values already embedded. The latter was a more common feeling amongst CSA interviewees than CG interviewees and there was an awareness for some that the CFO was a chance to offset the lack of contact with the natural world in other spheres of life.

> "I do like talking to people over coffee or tea, but I do like doing jobs on my own and just being off in a corner and getting on with it and being out in nature. Cos I like to be able, you know it's a bit of a cliché, but be able to commune (laughs) with something other than another person - talking - because I get that at other times in the week." 12-CSA-OT

5.4 Restructuring our relationship with nature

There was a view that there was a sense of disconnection from nature in modern life, which was was common. However it's not clear to what extent people viewed their relationship with nature as experienced through the CFOs as expressive of their own values or philosophy. Although some of the interviewees talked about this when asked about their values, articulating a non-binary understanding of humans and nature in line with Marx. This tended to be limited to CSA members who also spoke of 'rediscovering' themselves through their involvement.

> "I feel connected more than nostalgic, it's like this is part of me and oh I'm rediscovering it was there and I forgot about it kind of thing, so that's what it is" CSA member [talking about the experience of milking goats which they used to do for their grandmother] 5-CSA-HF

Although personal history plays an important role here, there is a sense that the activities and engagement with nature through the CSA is satisfying a more innate human need to experience nature.

> "I do think again, it's a primeval connection you know, humans were meant to connect to the earth in a very basic sense uh we rely on the earth and our local plot, and I think it's a very deep primeval connection." 14-CSA-OT

This goes beyond good vibes created by spending time in nature or connecting to nature and suggests rather that these experiences are actually fundamental to human nature and therefore well-being.

> "it's very much about connectedness it is yeah and that emotional stuff it is, it's not just about avoiding pesticides it's about connectedness more of a sort of philosophical thing there. Cos I'm into philosophically, I'm basically a non-dualist. So um yeah that connectedness with um the natural word is really important to me...so um, um in my philosophical outlook and much of my daily experience, I'm not separate to everything else, I'm completely connected to everything else. Um lots of other bits of my experience I'm separate from everything else. So I think getting my hands in the earth reinforces the connectedness that makes sense to me philosophically." P1-CSA-OT

Taking this holistic philosophy further would suggest that this is not so much connecting with nature but re-discovering human nature as continuous with extra-human nature through interaction with material elements of sensuous nature. The opportunity to spend time outside and interact with the natural environment was identified as beneficial yet participants were also aware of the role that the CFOs played in embedding this experience into their routines.

> "Um, there's a health, a general health, but more of a kind of well-being I think, I think people feel better when, I think people need to be outside more than they are. And if you find yourself not outside, then unless you kind of factor in doing something that gets you outside, like going jogging or bird watching or whatever it is, that gives you a reason to do it, then you quite easily spend all of your time inside don't you?" 13-CSA-OT

This reflects how it is quite easy to avoid this level of interaction with the natural environment in going about the usual business of life, and that in order to structure it in requires some effort, although this could be rewarding.

> "I definitely feel connected with the seasons more and going up there in the snow, like when it was snowy, it was snowy on the roads and it was horrible sludge everyone was trying to carry on and get in their cars and stuff and I got there and the whole field was white. And I really felt like I wouldn't

experience this winter if I'd just been at home trudging through the sludge on the pavement. The whole thing was white and it was actually on the edge of all the farmland and you felt like you could actually experience that weather" P1-CSA-OT

This kind of regular contact with nature through the project was explicit with the CSAs which required a regular work commitment as opposed to the community gardens where people were free to attend as they wished, although several seemed to maintain a regular routine of participation. The connection to nature fostered by involvement also seemed to feed into a wider awareness of the landscape, in the case of Hempsalls Farm people reported becoming more attuned to the seasonal rhythms of agriculture more generally.

"One thing I have noticed that with people talking about it, is that everyone has become more interested in farming generally. That on a Saturday you'll quite often talk to people and they'll be telling you who was ploughing, or who was drilling on their cycle into work and they'll be noting that. Whereas, it used to be that you just commute in and out and you wouldn't sort of raise your eyes off the road to look at what's going on. But people are more in tune I think, it's a very cyclical thing the farming and it ties you in with the seasons in a way." 2-CSA-HF-Dir

This is most likely linked to the geographical context in that both the community gardens were located within towns and the other CSA was on the outskirts of a town, whereas Hempsalls was in a rural agricultural setting. Although there was evidence the experience of other projects supported a sense of seasonality and wider interest in the local landscape even if the points of reference were not the same.

"I think that's the thing, and I think it's just the joy of seeing, like you know the different seasons and things like that, birds and the butterflies and it's just I think I like doing things like that. I mean I love going for walks, I mean sometimes I'm walking along somewhere which is boring, I mean I'll be walking along a road but I'll be admiring things, admiring people's gardens as I'm going along saying 'oh that's a well-kept garden, or that's a minimalist garden', I think people are working full time there (laughs) it's sort of those kind of things I think." 4-CG-BG

There is also a much wider point of reference in terms of the environment on a more global scale. Issues about sustainability and ecological production of food came up frequently during the interviews and most were concerned about climate change or other environmental problems. Some linked their involvement in the projects to addressing these societal problems even if only in a small sense it was a way of expressing agency in a political sense although the extent to which this mattered to people varied.

"I think in many respects because of my career and everything you're a little maybe oblivious to what's going on, because you so focused on that side of it and then obviously say at the weekends especially when the children are young you're occupied with them. So it's something that you don't really think about. But obviously we all have been made very much aware over the last, oh quite a number of years now, what's going on in the environment and yes it does make you think um and what can you do yourself to try and help. And I think that is and I know it's only a small thing but the fact that we are growing the vegetables organically um that in itself probably does help, we're doing our little bit if you like." 3-CG-BG

"I think it's probably made me realise how viable the alternatives are. You know you don't have to be locked into the supermarket thing, you know, you can actually do, do something different and it will work. Cos I think until you try it, you think 'oh I don't know', but now, yeah I've got this sort of proof that it will work and it's much better. But I suppose a lot of people are still in that place, where they've got no knowledge of alternatives and the fact that they will work" 10-CSA-OT

The sense in which these kinds of projects might act as a response to environmental problems on a global scale might seem questionable. However the sort of values and behaviour they encourage might be taken as a starting point for more ecological citizenship (Psarikidou, 2015; Seyfang, 2006). Furthermore enabling people to feel like they are 'doing their bit' is important in counteracting the sense of helplessness brought about by alienation from food production.

5.5 Conclusion

Spending time outdoors at all of the CFOs was almost universally identified as an important aspect of participation and inherently beneficial for people's well-being. This is perhaps unsurprising given the body of evidence already supporting this claim. What is significant though is the way the projects explicitly structured this beneficial time into people's routines which was often absent of such experiences despite the acknowledged benefits.

"I think it forces us to get out the house, especially with the kids it's quite easy on a Saturday it's quite easy just to mooch around the house and everyone gets a bit fed up. So I think I kind of miss the routine of coming here and being forced to get out, cos when I come here it's lovely and I really enjoy it, but sometimes it's a bit of an effort to get out, know what I mean." S24-CSA-OT

As the quote above alludes to this is not so much about human beings connecting or reconnecting to some sort of externalised sphere of nature but embedding themselves through productive labour in a natural yet managed context in their local community. The idea of humanity being continuous with nature is picked up by some of the interviewees themselves and was central to Marx's understanding of

human nature (Marx, 1959). Labour, particularly food growing requires a purposive interaction with natural materials its production illustrating an 'umbilical link with nature' (Morgan, 2010, p. 1852). This purposive interaction was valued by participants in contrast with other experiences of just being in the more natural environment of the projects which can create positive affect. The utilization of natural resources in the production of food might be seen to be at odds with contemplative experiences of nature also described by participants. However the method of managing the land within these spaces is not obviously in conflict with more quiet reflection and enjoyment of nature.

> The hot weather seemed perfect for scything to me, not too sure if I am any more competent than anyone else but I was asked to tutor another member who seemed to be enjoying it too. I stopped periodically to sharpen the blade, and when a frog jumped out of a clump of grass I was about to scythe; it narrowly avoided becoming a brassiere dish. As I was relocating the frog it made me wonder how he might have fared had we been attacking the weeds with an industrial mower or herbicide. (Excerpt from field diary, July 2013)

It would be naïve to suggest that there is no tension at all between the aims of producing food and preserving the natural environment, perennial problematic weeds for example are cheerfully exterminated without a thought for their biodiversity value. However the nature that the people in these projects are interacting with or connecting to, are in reality very managed elements; crops, animals and landscapes which wouldn't exist in nature unless you accept humanity as part and parcel of nature itself that shapes the environment. In one sense this seems a worrying position in that if we accept humanity as nature what processes can we really consider unnatural regardless of the damage they might do to the rest of nature. This misses the point though since if we are continuous with nature then we are only damaging ourselves if we damage it, this can clearly be seen by the way that climate change is a threat to planetary well-being including human well-being. This though is a negative argument for an enlarged understanding of nature. What was emphasized in the qualitative data was the positive impact on well-being that the projects afforded via interaction with nature, this is quite different to experiencing nature in a 'twee way' as one interviewee put it. The organisational form of the CFOs effectively structured this meaningful interaction into people's everyday life, combining it with meaningful production and social interaction.

"…the thing is even the term nature is problematic because it implies that there is nature and there is us, this problem of dualism is very much inherent in our western culture so you need to try and break out of the fact that oh what is happening, life beyond ourselves is being seen as something quite alien by children, not just children but adults as well and unless you know something you can't care for it or understand it and that's what really is at the heart of that nature deficit disorder idea…well you can use the term re-connect with nature because that's a useful thing but you're not re-connecting with something else but you're learning about the nature of the universe you're in basically." 12-CSA-OT

Chapter 6 – Growing community

Introduction

The last chapter focussed on how the activities undertaken through participation in the CFOs facilitated a more meaningful relationship with nature, a prevalent theme in the existing literature on local and alternative food. The literature speaks not only to a desire to rediscover our relationship with nature but also to rebuild social relationships through an alternate model of food production, embedded in social relationships (Cox et al., 2008, pp. 205–6 esp.). This is readily apparent in the names of the organisations that were the focus of this research; *community* gardens and *community* supported agriculture, suggesting that the social interaction experienced within them will be key to the sense of well-being people derive from their involvement. The community orientation of the projects is in contrast to the individualised experiences of consumption in capitalism (Galt et al., 2014, p. 137). The process of labour in alienating people not just from the labour process but also from one another under conditions of capitalist production is central to Marx's conception of alienation. His intention is not to say that people can truly become disconnected since he regarded humans and production as inherently social. What Marx is arguing is that through capital social relations become alienated or commodified expressed through primarily financial relationships (Holloway, 2012, p. 95). Work, although not wage labour is the main activity that constituted participation in the CFOs, hence this was a key arena for social interaction and instrumental in the formation of social bonds between CFO participants. These social relationships and interaction are the main focus of this chapter. I will also consider what underpinned these social connections and explore how they spilled out beyond

the organisations themselves into the lives of people involved with them. Given the centrality of work

for social interaction it overlaps with the dominant themes of the next chapter work and agency.

6.1 Sociability in work

Although there were quite regular social events connected to all of the CFOs the social environment

was predominantly structured by the regular working parties at CSAs or daily work sessions at the

community gardens.

> "You know you just go deeper when you're working with someone, you know. I find you just talk
> more about, you share much more about what's really important to you than you can, um in a
> conventional sort of social situation. And you could even say it's not a social situation cos you're
> working together. The fact that we're choosing to work, do that job, as opposed to having to do it
> for income or is a moot point really, doesn't make much difference actually. Cos it is work, you
> know, it's definitely work. And so um people that, who would otherwise, would be acquaintances,
> with whom you might interact on a fairly sort of, in a relatively shallow way as is appropriate for
> that sort of social level of contact, it's different when you're working with someone. You become
> a colleague, shared endeavour, you know um and it's more time there's more time spent in close
> proximity on a common task and I think that just opens up much more opportunity for deep sort
> of social interaction." P1-CSA-OT

In both CSAs completing your work commitment was a central requirement of participation.

Therefore, it played a more central role in structuring social encounters than in community gardens

although the social side of work was consistently emphasized as valued in both contexts. Although

most still considered what they did at the projects was work it afforded a chance for meaningful social

exchanges which weren't necessarily possible in other contexts.

> "I get outdoor activity, um fresh air, um meet friends, uh yeah. I live on my own so I've got no, not
> exactly, no communication, you meet your neighbours, but you just say hello, isn't the weather
> awful, whatever yeah. Down here, we're in each other's company a lot longer so you can tell
> people your troubles and they'll listen to you, it's not that I don't tell my children my troubles, but
> I don't tell my children everything" S3-CG-BG

The unhurried and unpressured nature of time spent in each other's company seemed to be a central

feature of why people found the opportunity for social interaction so beneficial. Whilst you could find

a sympathetic ear and offload your troubles to someone there was no expectation that people talk

about things if they didn't want to. This is illustrated in the first quote where the interviewee notes

that the shared task provides a focus thereby negotiating any social awkwardness and annotating the interaction. The next quote uses two metaphors to neatly describe how the work in CFOs is conducive to conversation, but without any pressure or expectation.

> "yeah well it's I mean it's like being on a journey, like a train journey or a coach journey where you've got an accepted um duration to be together with someone so …There's a kind of point I guess, a kind of investment of the conversation, isn't there? Um and you know you'll probably meet those people again in some form so it's not, it's lots of new people, who aren't strangers, so that's quite an odd social set up. You're presented with probably new, or spoken to a couple of times, but probably like-minded potential friends to have a chat with um so yeah, doing your jobs. But it's also why people like doing other sport and people like talking about football in the pub, because it's a nice easy topic to talk about and then they can bring in other things, as and when your dynamic feels comfortable. So about a task, you can talk about a task and you can talk about your participation in the farm and then it meanders there abouts, or not. And again it's quite natural to be silent if you're working and then a little conversation will spark up. So it's not a, it's not a common kind of social experience… I guess if you're a parent watching a child's football match you could say 'ooh that's good', you can you know dip in and out of, you're there for the duration. You've got some kind of time investment and you might see each other again, or you can always just stay shut up and watch, get on with what's happening so there's not that kind of pressure to chat." CSA-13-OT

It may seem quite trivial that the projects created space for what might be considered a casual chat, but this kind of seemingly incidental and unimportant part of modern life is becoming less and less integral. Consider this in contrast to buying food at the self-service checkout at the supermarket or placing an online order, where the need for social interaction let alone meaningful interaction has been obviated. The chance then to socialise with people in a safe space was particularly vital to some of the more vulnerable users of community gardens, some of whom had become volunteers after initially being referred through health services.

> "If I think back to how I was when I first started, I was very nervous around people and this has given me an opportunity to sort of, to be in a safe environment, where I can be around, or I can get used to being around people again. So yeah it's been a confidence builder in that respect." S11-CG-BG

However this was not limited to the community gardens at CSAs also the routine of involvement and the social contact through work at the CSA could act as a critical form of support.

> "The year I joined which was early 2011, I was clinically depressed. I had so much stress from work and life, I'd had an awful eighteen months/two years before that and it's one of the reasons I left

my job and I was, I was in a bad way. I could hardly, I couldn't make a decision on – do I want one pint of milk or two tomorrow or which, what pair of socks should I put on in the morning – and it was really I'm sure just going up to the farm that first spring/summer just really helped me, just grounded me, calmed me down. You could go up there and operate on 5% of your mental ability sort of literally let everything calm down, unstressed, outside and it was really, really beneficial. I really just sort of found myself and, soft landing rather than hard landing, and um I think the conversation, think it was the year that there were more people up there and often used to go up in the week and there were people up there, and just some of the one to one conversations were really helpful in that situation. So I feel I owe it quite a lot and it feels a very safe place. I think that was built out of that, that I could just go and find myself or heal myself" CSA-14-OT

The importance of physical space to this interviewee also demonstrates how difficult to separate out social interaction from the structure of work and the natural, material elements that are engaged in work and facilitating the interaction. From the social interaction that arose through participation in the projects more meaningful relationships could be formed.

"It's definitely been good, a good thing to do and it's one of those things where you think to start off with, you think oh I don't know what this is gonna be like really. But you know I'm gonna have to, I'll give it a go and see, just try, jump in and see what happens. And as I say I'm not, I'm not the best person at, I'm not very gregarious you know, I'm quite sort of um withdrawn and a shy sort of a person. So I have to sort of force myself to go out and do these sort of things so um it's been good to meet lots of new people and chat with them, you know when I've chatted with people I'm fine. You know, I don't feel awkward or anything like that you know. I wouldn't of made anywhere near the number of acquaintances and friends that I have done if I hadn't joined the farm" CSA-8-HF

6.2 Friendship, social bonds and community

"Well, just the work really and if you do work together with people usually you do quite often become friends or acquaintances. Or you know you see people other times, rather than just work or farm or whatever you want to call it." 15-CSA-OT

The quote above highlights how friendships are often formed through work relationships, so it is not surprising that the work of CFOs functioned in a similar way. This was particularly important for people who no longer worked, which applied to a significant proportion of participants in the CFOs either because of unemployment or retirement.

"I do like the companionship, because having worked for the last forty years, although you don't choose the people you work with, but they become friends and colleagues, so just to lose that. You suddenly lose twenty or thirty people that you no longer see every day and it would just be me and my partner, um I haven't got close family" S7-CSA-OT

"Actually being retired now it's really given me an interest in life to be honest. I know that might sound a funny thing to say, but there was times when I just didn't know what to do with meself …it has given me an interest in life I think" S13-CSA-OT

Only Hempsalls CSA didn't have a significant proportion of people who weren't working, so there wasn't the same impetus to fill that void. However this didn't necessarily mean that the interaction and relationships arising through participation didn't fulfil an important role.

"a lot of the men are working um certainly a lot of the ones I meet are working up in Cambridge, usually on the science park or around somewhere to do with that. And certainly, like Clare got to know a lot of the people through taking the kids to school and toddler groups, and sort of working in the village. And that and as a man you don't typically get to meet other blokes in the village and that, cos you're not there. The people you socialise with are the people you work with who are all in Cambridge, or distributed around that…it was good to be able to actually go and sort of talk to other blokes who I don't work with" 7-CSA-HF

This CSA was a focal point for the local community which brought people together, this impact was perhaps more significant here because the CSA was situated on the outskirts of a small rural village. As the quote above points out, many of the people in the villages travel to nearby Cambridge instead of working in the village where only a small number of people work the land. This project also had informal links to the church community so although its members were dispersed around a few villages in the area it was somewhat of a focal point for the community. Through public events and involvement of the farm in other aspects of village social life it seemed to be a factor in pulling people together through common interest or experience.

"we're just in a small village with our church before, and you knew that there were four hundred people in that village and there were a hundred that would come to village events. They'd get involved in things and it was the same hundred no matter what it was. Whether it was a church event or whether it was the village hall fundraising committee, it was the same people going round in circles. Just sometimes you were on one side of the stool and sometimes you were on the other kind of thing and then there were a few hundred people who nobody knew who they were. You know you never saw them, you never got to meet them, they drove their car into Cambridge, uh for work, they drove back, they went shopping at Tesco's, you had nothing to do with them. Um and I just think that's all wrong and that there's a real sense of community missing, um particularly from our small villages and places like this, where we're essentially a commuter village for Cambridge fundamentally. And so just getting people together from, who wouldn't normally meet, who possibly wouldn't normally meet anybody. Um and get that sense of satisfaction of putting in a hard day's work and going back tired with a bag of veg is what I wanted really from that point of view" 2-CSA-Dir

The other CFOs didn't map onto the local area so much since they were all located in or on the outskirts of larger urban towns, although they sometimes brought people into contact who lived in the same area.

> "You'd miss all the companionship, there's people here that I never knew before, yet they only live round the corner from me" S2-CG-BG

Sometimes though participation in the CSA allowed people to experience a sense of community that they felt was lacking in their own locale. The shared experience and activity if the CFOs was crucial in creating this feeling, but the following quote from a couple of members of the Oak Tree CSA also suggests that shared values are important too in creating community.

> "The thing is that when you live in a community normally you're all living together and you see one another regardless of what you do as an activity, whereas this is a completely different group that's spread out but comes together in this sort of hub. S27a-CSA-OT
>
> Yes I would certainly miss that, that sense of just that instant friendliness when we're all here sharing something and so there's that instant friendliness which is a really nice feeling, something to belong to. When you live in a town you can be in your little isolated units to come and be part of something that feels more like a community. S27b-CSA-OT
>
> Yes it's finding a peer group when it's actually spread out, I mean cos there's nobody in our road that we could identify who would be interested in this kind of thing…we co-exist alongside other people. Who we occasionally have friendly conversation or a discussion with in the street but there's not that kind of oh let's have a street party kind of thing. S27a-CSA-OT
>
> Yeah I mean you sort of barely brush up against them, you know you sort of glance off each other." S27b-CSA-OT

6.3 Common values and diversity

Underpinning the formation of social bonds then was some kind of common set of values or outlook on life. At some level this is of course essential and many participants acknowledged that people at the CFO shared some values otherwise they wouldn't be there.

> "yeah um and it's like it's like joining any club isn't it. You've got a natural filter so you've probably got more chance of meeting like-minded people within that and um yeah. I'm trying to think of, I don't think I've met anyone I've actively disliked (laughs). Which maybe is not something that is true of lots of other things that I have to go along to, but you associate more with certain people than others but you, there's a nice, everyone seems to be interesting one way or another." 13-CSA-OT

The community garden projects tended to be less homogenous in this sense, since people often found themselves involved with the garden through referral by health or social services either for training or some kind of therapeutic benefit. Often though they continued volunteering alongside other volunteers who themselves had varied backgrounds and perceived diversity was also highlighted as an important facet and key benefit of participation, which made social exchanges all the more interesting.

> "There wasn't a lot of people down there that went to school, go to sixth form, go to university and then you go straight into a job. Like there was a lot of people who had gone round life an alternative route, still been successful, but like alternative to my route… Obviously I have friends at home and everything, but I just like meeting different people…I think it's important to learn to socialise with different people that aren't in your friendship group." 19-CG-BG

The value of diversity was also emphasized in the context of the CSAs, and although the demographic data reveal that both could be more diverse, it also shows that CFOs do not universally conform to the middle class niche pursuit that local and alternative food practices are often thought to be (Blake et al., 2010; Luetchford & Pratt, 2011, p. 89; Perez et al., 2003).

> "Got to know people, lovely chats with people, people of all age ranges and backgrounds I wouldn't normally meet. Think that's been another really large part of why we've got on so well in Ipswich, is we've me a really big range of people in the community which living in Bristol we just met people in their late twenties cos that's who we hung out with. So you know kids and retired people and when you're working side by side with someone you're just chatting about, it's always really enjoyable, well not always, mostly, largely." 16a-CSA-OT

6.4 A collective endeavour

All of the CFOs were a collaborative in the sense that labour and the results of it were shared even if there were different roles for paid staff connected to the project; the distinction between roles was not clearly experienced.

> "It's become much more of a team effort so it used to be just me running the working parties… and people have taken on bits, so we've got a separate preserving group and they look after the gluts…We became a not for profit social enterprise about this time last year and that has changed it… As far as I'm concerned it's (the social side of CSA) a delightful side effect, it's what it has become. It's not what my personal aim was but it's what it has involved into and I think it's great, I mean the vast majority of my social life revolves around it. It's lovely it's a delightful way to talk

to people because it's so relaxed...it's kind of like breathing really, well it's not that interesting day to day, but if you didn't do it you wouldn't half miss it" 1-CSA-OT-Dir

"Every time I go to the community garden I always feel uplifted by it and that's how other people feel most of the time. Otherwise they wouldn't keep coming and you know on a day like today, when the sun is shining and there's a blue sky, I come from the office and I go down there and it feels fantastic. Just the environment and the people in it I adore them and they're my friends too, I mean everybody sort of says that I'm their boss, but I don't feel like their boss at all... it's a really heart-warming place to be" 11-CG-PCG-Dir

In both of these quotes the CFO plays an important social role for the staff working there, although this isn't necessarily limited to these kinds of spaces. Most people's job or work is an important constituent of their social life. However, the above quotes suggest that for the staff the CFO is central. The collective nature of the enterprise of all CFOs deepened the social relationships since those involved were working towards shared goals.

"… the stuff you find that you'll have planted will then be harvested by the next time you come down, but there's no oh that's my bed and that's my stuff why have you done that. That doesn't exist because as I said we're all there as a team we're all there working towards the one cause." 3-CG-BG

"The real communal connection comes through being up there and working with people, both the practicalities of that and what you're actually achieving; and also the intra-personal interactions" 12-CSA-OT

The well-being benefit of forming social relationships and support networks through the CFOs could be regarded as incidental, but in reality most of the projects were motivated by social goals, particularly the community gardens.

"…we all need social contact don't we? And for me that's the single most important thing at both garden projects is giving people the opportunity to interact with other people and work as a team and make friends and develop support systems." 11-CG-PCG-Dir

For the CSAs, creating a sustainable production model was a more express purpose, but collective nature of the work was key to making this achievable in the eyes of members and paid workers.

"The community to my mind is a way of making the sustainable stuff work, it's a lovely side effect, it's not just me anymore, other people are involved. For some people that connection, the community is the purpose of it, to me that is the key, it's labour intensive doing the low carbon farming. And people just want to get involved and the two just match and that was the bit I hadn't realised until all that happened and you just think, this is extraordinary" 1-CSA-OT-Dir

6.5 Social Events

Celebratory events at the CSA were often the culmination of this collective effort whether it ended in success or failure.

> "Um I guess it's different, the nice thing about the parties is that it's more of a celebration than someone's birthday, or someone's house warming. It's more of a celebration cos we're celebrating what we've done all year, so it feels to me like a more, a more kind of, it's not just enjoyment for the sake of having the party, it's kind of sharing what we've done together it's celebrating what we've done together. I suppose in a way I would expect, like in a more agricultural society, where everybody had been working hard all year. You would expect them to feel something more than just a frivolous, hey it's my birthday let's all go and get drunk kind of party, like there's more to it." P2-CSA-OT

Certainly many people seemed to enjoy the social events connected to the CFOs, but they weren't considered that important to most people. At the community gardens social events were typically more public events so didn't have the same significance as seasonal celebrations at the CSAs which were almost exclusively for members and their families. Although there were some exceptions, for instance one of community gardens organised a yearly trip for volunteers, most events were bigger public social occasions like an annual summer garden party. In comparing their experience of participation, the much more regular social interaction through work was regarded as more important than the social occasions which were seen as more of a nice bonus.

> "I mean they're nice enough (parties/social gatherings) and the ones I've gone to are fine, but they feel a bit more artificial than meeting to work" 14-CSA-OT

6.6 Conclusion

The role that the CFOs play in annotating social interaction acting as a medium for social relationships varied, for those who were newcomers to an area or isolated they were very important, arguably vital.

> "I guess we, intially everything the farm has pretty much been everything to us. Everyone we know, almost everyone we've met, or even people that weren't really connected to the farm but you kind of met because they were friends of friends of people at the farm and they sort of knew you, and they told you about stuff, they knew you because you were part of the farm...Didn't we {turning to partner] do a thing, where we looked at all of our hobbies and all of our friends and we tried to work out if anyone we knew was independent of a farm beginning, and there was pretty much no one." 16a-CSA-OT

"Well it's company for me because I'm a single man living on my own all my life. So it's nice to have somebody to chat to, nobody that's concerned with clock watching, it's not that sort of pressurised thing. It's just come and enjoy the sunshine, sit down have a cup of coffee…uh it lifts my mood, no end, I mean I suffer from depression so much, I go home on me own, you know I end up crying some nights, um and just I have to make a determined decision to come here, it's not easy for me to get out the house to go anywhere, because it's all a little bit scary for me" S1-CG-BG

"Last year, at the end of last year when I was going through all this DWP business and they were changing all the benefits, going to that farm was like sort of saved me a bit in a way cos I was (sighs). I did get a bit depressed sometimes, you know and it was going under a bit, but being able to go there and just sit there for a little bit you know it's. If you can just forget all the forms and all the interviews and medicals and crap they put you through I don't know, I think I wouldn't have come out of it as well without there to go to." 15-CSA-OT

For others although a valued aspect of social life and potential source of new friendships they were not critical. Key to forming these bonds was the work of the CFOs the core activity of the projects, this was repeatedly identified as more valued by participants than other occasions; events which were less frequent and lacked the structure of work, making them more peripheral to social interaction. Although the social bonds formed and meaningful connections made might be regarded as incidental, they were undoubtedly a major benefit for people's well-being and this was effectively built in to the CFOs.

"I think it would be very difficult to just go down there and get on with your job and not get involved with the people, because that's just not the way we run it. We run it on a almost a family basis, you know we have a tea break we all sit down have a cup of tea or coffee have a chat, not that we're chatting about very much and not necessarily about the garden or vegetables, but it's just the social side of it." 3-CG-BG

The primacy of economic relations over social was underlined by members of the CFOs who had retired or become unemployed and experienced somewhat of a social vacuum. However, it was the accounts of those who yearned for community and social contact that they could not find elsewhere that really highlighted the tendency of capital to alienate us from one another by turning social exchanges into economic ones. The work of the CFOs was critical to facilitating this kind of contact and provide a more comfortable context for social interaction (Crossan et al., 2016, p. 13).

Chapter 7 – Agency and work

Introduction

The integral role that work played in the social aspects of participation was highlighted in the last chapter, but the experience of work within the CFOs was also significant in a number of other ways. Beyond the way it brought people together socially, work also acted as a form of physical exercise, a learning opportunity, provided a sense of purpose to many and perhaps most obviously it was the process that created the food which was the raison d'être of the CFOs. Those involved with the projects often perceived the work they did there as more meaningful and relevant to them than wage labour they undertook outside the project. This contributed to a sense of agency which was the most dominant theme in the data. This sense of agency was not only experienced in relation to work but also with regard to control over their food and the extent to which they had a stake in the CFO and the wider community through participation. It is difficult to untangle these aspects of the data as distinct themes since the different kinds of agency experienced were affected by the activities constituted in the work of the project and the way in which the projects were structured. Moreover the social and material connections embodied in the projects which were discussed in the two previous chapters also gave rise to agency experienced in different senses. It is difficult to attribute cause or effect, since the projects were organised according to social and environmental principles that defined the experience of labour which in turn was the main medium for social interaction and connections to nature to occur. Similarly the sense of agency which arose through participation was generated because of the organisational form and logic of CFOs which shaped participants'

experiences of involvement and work in such a way that made it enjoyable. For Marx of course the products of labour and the process itself were the means by which human beings alienate themselves from one another socially and from nature. Therefore work under capitalism is considered alienating and highly damaging to individual well-being, the specific concept of agency receives little attention from Marx in his exposition of alienation. However both freedom and consciousness; the capacity and opportunity to fulfil one's capabilities and awareness of them, are fundamental to his view of human nature and well-being; "free, conscious activity is man's species-character." (Marx, 1959, p. 31). In this chapter I will focus on the experience of work in the CFOs and the multiple ways in which agency was experienced by participants, the two are linked but also overlap with the themes discussed in previous chapters.

7.1 The un-empowered consumer, reclaiming agency

All of the projects could be said in some way to respond to the lack of control people experienced in the conventional food system. Whereby agency in food is only experienced as consumer choice and knowledge of food consumed is limited by a highly complex system of production and distribution often impenetrable to the sceptical consumer.

> "Um but you know, as I said you don't know what sort of fertilisers they're using, you just don't know, I mean even things like, you you've got things in the supermarket that says organically grown but…" 4-CG-BG

The complexity of the conventional food system and the myriad factors that influence food buying choices mean that attempting to source food which aligns with people's values is far from straightforward or logical.

> "Yeah, so you've got, I kind of see why you like it and you want it as the prime thing. So you've got food miles, in physically how far it's had to come and there's an iffy scale there of what you would accept and what you wouldn't. You've got how it's been produced so whether it's been produced via a fair-trade thing or big multinational company who do bad things elsewhere or in a place where it shouldn't be grown. Um and then you've got the kind of organic and how it's been produced and then that varies from product to product. I mean I and again I'm probably not being very scientific or rational but I feel getting organic milk is probably worth it. Whereas um something else, I've stopped buying organic spinach when it comes up, on the choice I buy the bigger bag, because it's

cheaper than the organic one. But we do still buy organic milk and I'm sure there's probably some science about the thickness of skins and what you would eat and what you wouldn't but that's a choice that I make, probably not very rationally." 13-CSA-OT

However involvement in the CFO could enable people to reduce their reliance on a food system they were dissatisfied with and felt they had little control of and turn to an alternative more acceptable form of food provisioning.

"The fact that people are actually getting off their arses and saying we don't want this, yeah it's cheap but it's full of sugar and salt and rubbish and a third of the stuff is thrown away because it doesn't look nice. People are starving in the world it's bloody scandalous, I don't really want to be part of that but financially I'm sort of forced into that, but the farm is completely the opposite of that. People doing it through going up, working, planting their own stuff and eating it you know. So you know exactly what's been done to it and where it's from and it's not really much more expensive than you know buying it." 15-CSA-OT

In this quote the CSA member speaks of dissatisfaction with the food system yet a continued reliance upon it, which membership of the project goes some way to addressing. This was common to many of the interviewees and the experience of producing food within the context of the CFO was often juxtaposed against the generic supermarket – the endpoint of the conventional food system, and symbolic of its faults.

"well it's pretty grim really, you look at the shelves and you think, oh it's been sitting around in the supermarket or the warehouse for however long, it's probably got horrible chemicals in it. You know the experience just isn't very satisfying, um and nutritionally the food you're buying is probably far inferior, so yeah the whole experience is awful really compared to going to the farm and getting a veg box" 10-CSA-OT

"I think it's the opportunity to know where your food has come from and how it's been grown, how it's been looked after um the welfare of animals, um to know that there are very few food miles involved. I think also to maybe show people occasionally just because a carrot's got two legs, doesn't mean it's inedible you know. Because everything in the supermarkets is all A1 perfect shiny, sort of thing whereas it's perfectly possible to eat vegetables that aren't like that, which I think people forget sometimes." 8-CSA-HF

However whilst conventionally produced food was treated universally with a sense of distrust and regarded as less than ideal, food produced at the CFOs could not and did not account for all of participant's diets by any means. Regardless of the share of diet it contributed, it played an important role beyond its nutritional value, since it enabled people to reclaim some agency over their food.

Although many were guided by organic or Fairtrade labels in their buying choices, this couldn't match

the perceived quality and trust in food produced at the CFO.

> "I do use them (supermarkets) but in a limited way really, only if I can't get the stuff anywhere else, would never occur to me to go to the supermarket to get fruit and veg or anything like that. Having said that the only exception would probably be organic carrots, if I couldn't get carrots anywhere I would probably get some organic carrots but even they don't taste anything like the farm carrots…We know it's all grown in nice conditions, there's not pesticides or anything used, which is something that always bothers me about stuff that you buy in shops, you know I gather that some crops are just sprayed and sprayed and sprayed. It's not very nice to think about it really, so you know exactly what goes on at the farm cos you're involved in it." 17-CSA-OT

For some participants it enabled them to express their values about food and was part of a political

statement or action against the conventional food system that was considered important.

> "Um yeah so value wise it's the people, uh in terms of beliefs, it's the um the learning opportunity; the enterprise the idea that we are regaining locally growing skills that we could you know hopefully expand upon you know. I mean I'd love to see more CSAs in Ipswich, I'd love to see more CSAs across the other side of town, I'd be involved I'd love to be involved in helping to set them up you know um, don't know where I'd find the time. But I'd love to do that cos I think it's such an important thing I could potentially stop being in that CSA just to help get another one off the ground."P1-CSA-OT

At the community gardens the sense in which participation constituted a political act or expression of

political agency was rare. Different organisational aims meant that participation was not so explicitly

organised around the production and distribution of communally grown food. This was less the case

at the Big Garden but involvement in both CGs was not generally motivated by political reasons,

although food growing remained the core element of the CGs and volunteers frequently took home

food. That is not to say that those involved in these projects did not have political views about the

food system and did not view their participation as political in any sense, but it was not so important

to the sense of agency they experienced.

> "…but obviously yes we are unfortunately in an age where we are slaves to supermarkets um and I think, yes probably there are things you can do about that or could do about that um in order to maybe have overcome that. And I know we do see in the press etc. about people who are pretty much self-sufficient with their you know with their produce and everything else, but at least again we're you know we're doing a little bit, that is yeah it's good." 3-CG-BG

7.2 Expressing agency and taking responsibility

Regardless of participants' political outlook the connection to the food being grown was meaningful

for people in all of the projects and linked to a much greater appreciation of the food when consumed.

> "It's a real sense of achievement, it's different to oh you get some food from the supermarket or something and you just eat it and like it's ok, that was delicious maybe. But, then if you have an entire plate of food that is all yours and you've put all the work into it there is, you might not think about it instantly, but there is a different attitude towards the actual meal. And you appreciate more and everything just tastes nicer, that's probably because also it's fresher but um yeah, it's just a sense of achievement and pride in general that you've put all your work into this" 9-CSA-HF

Although the perception that food produced through the CFO tasted better was pretty much universal,

people were circumspect about claiming whether taste was objectively superior or down to their

involvement in the growing process.

> "…well as I say it does taste, well maybe it's just psychological I don't know but you know these things, it feels as though it tastes better than the supermarket food" 4-CSA-BG

Whether the taste or quality of the produce did exceed offerings from the conventional food system

was ultimately not as important as involvement in the production of the food. This gave people agency

over their food and created a sense of satisfaction and enjoyment of the taste of their food regardless

of whether that was real or imagined.

> "There's a sense of celebrating achievement and I'm thinking again of the analogy of seeing your kids do something really good. Like I don't know excel in sport or any undertaking, you know, or just having good fun. So it's achievement, it's celebratory, the quality just as your you know your children are beautiful in your eyes as a parent, you know the food that you grow is um tastes wonderful (laughs), to your pallet. I don't know if I can ever recall growing anything that didn't taste wonderful; I'm sure others would disagree." P1-CSA-OT

Whilst contributing to the production of food for their own consumption created benefits it also

meant taking on the burden of work and to some extent responsibility for production. Although

participants in the community gardens weren't expected to take individual responsibility for

contributing to food production as much as members of the CSA were, most tended to feel some sense

of duty to the projects even if this was not formalised.

> "No responsibility, if for some reason I wake up on Thursday morning and don't feel like going I don't have to. Whereas, when you've got a job that needs to be done and there are a lot of

commitments involved in it, you have to get on with it don't you, if for some reason I start to not like it I can just say it's not for me and walk away...I do feel committed to it, I feel that I wouldn't want to wake up on Thursday morning and just look at the weather and go ah I'm not gonna go today. I do actually think, I have actually you know on my diaries ring fenced Thursdays, you know, no I'm sorry I can't meet up I've got garden today, but I can come for lunch, it finishes at 1." 19-CG-BG

As this quote demonstrates although not obliged to attend the CG this volunteer felt a commitment to attend. CSA members also highlighted a lack of responsibility as being appealing although they were notionally required to complete their work commitment this was not strictly enforced and there was a high degree of flexibility in when and how this was completed.

"I just see myself as a, a foot soldier really but it's quite nice just to be that, go up and do not have to think very much, not have to organise or feel responsible is really nice. In fact I think that's probably a pretty big plus, that part of my life compared to most of the other parts where you feel you have to do stuff for yourself or other people, but organise and do it and take responsibility for it and chase people up." 14-CSA-OT

Although individuals cited a lack of obligation as a bonus CSA members also struggled with completing their hours sometimes and it was the collective nature of production which eased the burden of responsibility. This made the burden less onerous and also meant that although individuals did not always find time to consistently participate, collectively the CFOs continued to function.

"It's amazing isn't it, you know just putting in an hour or two every week and you've got the great results that you've got the food, I couldn't do that on my own at an allotment. I just wouldn't have the time and the skills. But, to be part of a team doing it and just contributing a small amount yeah it's great, it's really rewarding I think" 10-CSA-OT

"I'm not there to make a commitment I think that's the nice thing about this. You know you come, you just come when you can come sort of thing, and if you're not able to come nobody is going to sort of tell you off, or you don't feel that you're letting people down. You know what I mean, it's different because you know, like you could be doing volunteering somewhere else, you know in a charity shop or whatever, but that's actually a commitment and if you don't go for one day you feel as though you're letting someone down, you know what I mean. Whereas here you don't get that, you don't feel that you're letting someone down, because the garden will still be there and you can come back the next week or whatever, that's not you know, somebody else will do that job if you can't do it." 4-CG-BG

For the staff working at the CFOs their responsibility for the project was much greater and although this could be a burden it was also eased by the community of participants involved in the CFOs. Furthermore this responsibility was key to the agency the staff experienced and meaning they found

in their work, where they were actualizing personal values through work and contributing to a project

they regarded as important and valuable despite some of the stresses.

> "It's always a struggle, in terms of funding, you know we never have more than a couple of years
> in the bag. So it's virtually impossible to plan, you just have to soldier on, you have to have a very
> particular mind set to work in that environment, because there's not job security whatsoever…I'd
> say you know I have a very high level of responsibility and I can make a difference with my
> decisions and that's a great way to be in a job I think, and I really embrace that responsibility." 11-
> CG-PCG-Dir

Although responsibility could be viewed as a burden it also gave meaning to the activities fulfilled at

the CFO. This was not limited to staff, volunteers and members experienced the benefits of

participation because they felt a duty to attend, which was grounded in the social commitment and

material contribution they made.

> "It's social, I even said last week, it was really cold last Thursday and I had to laugh, because I
> wouldn't have gone out into my own garden. I would have gone out maybe to the compost bin
> and wandered back in and thought hmm, goodness it's a bit a grim. So going up to the garden (big
> garden) we were doing much the same jobs I should be doing in my own garden, but the social
> side of it, the commitment and actually knowing I've said I'd like to come every Thursday, come
> on then." 19-CG-BG

7.3 A sense of ownership

Many of the participants reported feeling a sense of ownership or stake in the project as highlighted

in the quotes above, this wasn't really formalised in the structures of the projects though. Instead it

was built up informally through involvement in the project so the degree to which this commitment

was felt depended on the extent of an individual's involvement in the project.

> "Interviewer: Yeah, so do you feel that you've got, that you've got you know a stake in the farm,
> that it's, that there's kind of part of you here or?
>
> 5-CSA-HF: I think for now, possibly not, but is there opportunity? Probably so."

As this member notes although they don't necessarily feel they belong to the project yet there is the

feeling that the opportunity is there. This is indicative of how participants felt in general about the

level of their involvement. Although there were some formal channels for participants to influence

the CFOs such as AGMs, mainly this occurred informally; it was up to members to take the opportunity

to become more involved if they had the time or inclination.

> "Um I mean sometimes I'm a little bit moany, when something happens that I haven't really known about. Partly because I've been involved with the baby and not really reading my emails and not really talking to as many people as I have before. And something comes as new to me, and I feel a bit like 'oh right well I had something to input into that, if only you'd asked me I could have told you x, y and z'. Like some of the lottery application things I could have really helped with, but I didn't have time and I didn't really know what was happening. Um but I think that's because I'm slightly out of it for other reasons, I think if I wanted to put more in and had time to I could of, but that's the kind of beauty of it. If you really want to get involved and have your say, then you can, if you don't and you're easy going you just go with things." P2-CSA-OT

> "Yeah, I feel like I can come along and um because I've been a dedicated member that my opinion along with many others is really valued and it will be heard…" 9-CSA-HF

Where people did feel that there was something important they had a view on or some way they could

contribute then they could influence the project.

> "There was quite a debate actually on um when you sign up to be a member for a year and putting a deposit down, and Leslie put forward the idea, because she'd had some bad experiences of people leaving the scheme after you know a couple of months and having to fill the places, she wanted to get people to put a deposit down. To secure a place for a year, and saw that if they actually paid some money it would be more of an incentive to stick with the scheme for a year. And I think initially she'd suggested that people pay fifty pounds for that and I objected to that actually at the meeting. I said that was just such a lot of money for people and unwaged people in particular and a couple of other people said that, and um there was quite an interesting discussion about it. So that was one example where um I think she did reduce the cost, I think it's twenty five pounds now." 10-CSA-OT

Concerns about a lack of transparency or formal arrangements for project participants to express their

views were very rare. This was indicative of the lived experience, in that participants generally felt that

their voice was heard, when they wanted or needed it to be, even if the formal structure of the

projects didn't offer explicit channels or mechanisms by which participants could influence the CFO.

> "I don't feel very involved, and I don't feel that's a problem, that works very well for me and I could get more involved if I wanted to. I mean Leslie is quite open to and the fact that she's set it up as a community interest company now with three trustees it's not just taking place on her land as it were... With the CSA, I can just switch my brain off and turn up there and say, what do you want me to do today, and then go off and do it and really it's just an opportunity to get out in the fresh air…" 12-CSA-OT

As the last quote shows the lack of formal responsibility meant that participants in the CFOs could

'switch off' if they wanted to and this was important feature of the work at the CFOs.

"Also one of the reasons I like going down is that due to my job which is very sort of mental I suppose - thinking mental - um I find that when I'm doing digging or something physical labour I surprisingly switch off. You think it's such a mindless task or whatever you would be thinking about other things, but actually you're focussing, you're doing the job and so it's a good time for me to not think about work or anything related to that" 7-CSA-HF

7.4 Enjoyable work: Quality and control in labour

Although the seemingly mindless quality of some of the work at CFOs was important for relaxation,

what was more frequently highlighted was its tangible and concrete nature which leant to it a more

explicit sense of purpose.

"...again in modern office life you do some problem solving, but it's never as quite as immediate or obvious, and again with planting seeds you've got a tangible effort to outcome. So I do an hour's work I put these in and we've got them they're there, and there's lots and lots of other jobs where the outcome has no bearing on how much effort you've put in. So you can sit and you answer a million emails and you leave at the end of the day and you think, have I, what on earth have I done? And that's you know just how it is and lots of people's work feels like that, I think. So to have kind of an experience where effort equals outcome is quite nice." 13-CSA-OT

The experience of tangible work that participants could make sense of compared unfavourably to paid

work which was often more abstract and therefore could seem pointless.

"It can be quite disheartening, you can work your entire life in the pharmaceutical industry and never work on a drug that ever makes it to market. So in that respect it can be a little bit frustrating at times, so it's quite nice as I said before be able to go and do something that you very immediately see the end result of." 8-CSA-HF

"I do software and you're very disconnected from anybody you might be helping at the other end cos you're basically sitting in an office typing and it may be making somebody happy, but if it is I don't know about it and half the time you're not really sure whether even the job they're doing either..." 2-CSA-HF-Dir

This contrasted with the work of the CFOs which had an express purpose; producing food to be

consumed by those producing it. As noted earlier this had an impact on people's enjoyment of the

food, but also the sense of accomplishment they gained through producing it. There was a connection

with both the product and the labour process; both were experienced as de-alienated. Whereas the

labour process and product in paid labour seemed to be less relevant in comparison, this is not to say

that people saw no purpose in their paid labour. Besides the obvious reward in the form of wages,

they may well have gained other benefits but this was not something explored in generating the data.

Interviewees were simply asked what kind of distinctions they saw between work in the CFO and paid

labour.

> "Interestingly I think when people work in a team doing a task there's often a greater sense of satisfaction because you're doing it with other people and um usually you're doing a slightly more tangible task, that you're then gonna stand back and look at and go yeah we've done that this morning... But equally an individual might do a task for the whole morning that they're just really enjoying and equally stand back and get a sense of satisfaction and pleasure out of it. I mean certainly for a lot of volunteers taking away a bag of veg at the end of the morning gives them a real, obviously it's a way of saying thank you to them, but they get a real joy out of that" 20-CG-BG-Dir

The oversight that participants had over the labour process and therefore product was also picked up

in the data. Although not necessarily involved in every stage of growing food participants were aware

of the entire labour process and might come into it at different points, key to this was the collective

nature of work. An individual may sow seed and perhaps weed a row of carrots but not harvest them

or potentially not be involved in producing that crop at all but as part of the collective they are

connected to the entire labour process. This was not just important for the appreciation of the food

produced but the sense of satisfaction gained through contributing to the product individually and

collectively.

> "You know in big companies you don't do products end to end you don't have the satisfaction of sowing the seed and then eating the carrot at the end of it, you are a little hoeing cog in the middle somehow" 2-CSA-HF-Dir

The enjoyment of work at the CFO was valued by those dissatisfied with their experience of paid work,

but it was also important for those who were not in paid work. This was particularly notable at the

community gardens, especially the PCG where many volunteers had come to the project via referral

from the job centre.

> "I like gardening, I find it relaxing and it's almost like having a proper job in a way... thing is I'm on DLA - Disability Living Allowance - and so it's almost like earning your benefit in a way. I find it difficult to hold down a proper job you know, because I can't handle stress very well" 21-CG-PCG

"When you sort of get like Christmas time and good Friday and all that, when you normally come down you miss that sort of week. So yeah sort of you look forward to the next week when it isn't a public holiday and you can come down." S21-CG-PCG

The above quotes illustrate how involvement in the CFO gave participants a sense of purpose which might previously have been experienced through paid work, although comparisons with paid work by interviewees suggest work within the context of CFO might actually be more satisfying. What was also crucial was the routine of involvement that participation brought this is identified in the quote from S21-CG-PCG. Here involvement in the project functions like work creating the medium for social interaction in the way a job might do, which is then absent during public holidays. As noted in the previous chapter the social role that work played in the CFOs was crucial.

"I was gonna be here and I had no friends and family in England, I saw their work days and just saw like these families in fields and I actually thought more important than the local food was that looks like a place I could have a community. So that was the real driving force on why I picked this farm…I guess the community has actually turned out" 6-CSA-HF

7.5 Freedom in work

Although work provided a welcome sense of structure for some people involved with the CFOs and also structured much of the social interaction, the degree of freedom participants still had in defining work was also significant.

"I mentioned about the jobs, but for example if you didn't feel like doing anything of those particular jobs you can go off and do something else um. So it's not set in stone, but obviously you do need to have some sort of a system working. Otherwise you'd have people walking around all over the place and doing things that don't need to be done. So there has to be still some control over it but it's not supervisory is what I think I'm trying to say" 3-CG-BG

"So if you're doing a job that you know how to do then I think everyone's quite happy for you to say why don't we do it like this and if you don't, it's for someone else to do that. So the hierarchy within it is quite fluid cos everyone has different experiences and skills at doing stuff don't they." 13-CSA-OT

There are two aspects of work autonomy picked up in the above quotes: The ability to be selective in choosing tasks within the CFO and secondly the ability to shape the way the actual task is carried out. The first of these meant that people could select work that was suited to their particular needs which vary over time.

"oh yeah, so in that way it adapts to whatever mood I'm in, if I'm grumpy and I just want to be on my own and like thrash out some weeding I can do that quietly. If I wanna go up and just take long tea breaks and I can, can spend longer there and see more people and talk to more people." P2-CSA-OT

"...if I'm up at the farm it's almost a meditation, if I'm an honest I've got my task and I just go and do it" 12-CSA-OT

"It's a relaxed atmosphere, it's you got like nice people down here, you got no one on your back giving you grief and they just leave you to do your own thing, you know let you get on with your work and haven't got someone in your ear hole." S20-CG-PCG

The second aspect of work autonomy is the freedom participants had in shaping their work, this was compared by some participants to their experience at work covered in the previous quotes. The general perception was that a more flexible approach was taken to work in the CFOs and a range of opinions were taken into account. The collective nature of work and lack of a hierarchical structure was key in defining work in this way, since although people could influence how a task was carried out this is typically established collectively although there was some scope for individuals to pursue particular tasks in their own way.

"It's up to you, you know, they say can you go and do this but it's up to you how it's done and if you don't want to do it you can do something else. There's no you have to do this job, there's no management really as well like, to fuck it all up which is what usually, usually what happened in real life work. Usually, the workers know how to do the work and get on with the work and as soon as the management start interfering it all goes to pot." 15-CSA-OT

"I think generally it's, we're more in tune with each other in terms of what needs to be done and stuff like that and so when somebody asks you to do something you think yes that's sensible I'll do it. Whereas at work it's not always the case that somebody they'll ask you to do something out of their own ignorance and they can be a bit uppity if you say, 'I don't think that's the right thing to do' and they just sort of demand that you do it anyway. And you think well fair enough and you'll do it but it doesn't sit very well. Whereas, I think at the farm it's usually more obvious what needs to be done and say apart from a few exceptions, everybody usually agrees to what we're gonna do but we, there are circumstances where you decide to do something else." 7-CSA-HF

The way in which the CFOs were organised did of course structure the work even if this allowed some freedom for participants to define their activities within the projects in various ways. There was also a distinction between the CSA and CG projects in that there was no regular work commitment required for CG participants, although as noted earlier most people felt some obligation to attend regularly and

contribute to the project. This was motivated partly by the benefits of participation, but also the sense that they were contributing to something worthwhile.

7.6 Working towards community and well-being

People clearly enjoyed participating in the CFOs themselves but there was also a view that they were not only doing something for themselves but also for others or the community in general.

> "I thought that would fit nicely with what I want, so I probably primarily joined it as an activity and because it was something which was worth supporting, rather than because I wanted a veg box particularly from there if you see what I mean. So it was community driven." 13-CSA-OT

> "I think it represents your local community...getting together for no monetary benefits but lots of other benefits. I think modern society, a lot of people are actually driven by money and this is not money driven. The actual funding it gets is tiny, you know they actually spend a tiny amount on that space, I know they've granted us the land to use but actually it's giving well-being to a lot of people, it offers therapy to a lot of people with mental health issues." 19-CG-BG

> "I'm really interested in community, I'm very interested in sharing kindness, working together, I worry that I don't know my neighbours even though I went to meet them, I never see them." S6-CSA-OT

The way in which people felt they were doing something good was also interrelated with the agency they themselves experienced through participation, that the work they were doing was useful and productive; that it contributed to the collective effort of the project.

> "Like some days I'd go and there'd still be horse muck to move and I'd think awh I'd really like to plant out blah blah blah. But I'd think no it's alright I'll have my time, I'll do that at some point. There's summers and summers ahead of us to do all that it just you know, I'll do one thing at a time, doesn't matter what it is as long as it's something useful." P1-CSA-OT

> "I don't really mind what I end up doing because I just want to go down there and feel like I'm doing something useful and so don't necessarily want to do what your favourite job is, but I'm not a big fan of weeding." 18-CG-BG

As the last quote encapsulates whilst there were physical benefits which kept people fit this was integrated with the social interaction through work and sense of agency experienced through work. The physical aspect of work was highlighted as a beneficial form of exercise in itself but this combined with the sense of worth gained through work which was satisfying and productive.

> "It's not something you'd get from going to the gym. If you were to lift something at the gym it's not the same as shovelling compost and weeding that involves your physical body strength,

because you're not gaining anything by lifting a weight. Whereas you're gaining something by shovelling things and doing something productive with your energy." 18-CG-BG

"I like to feel my body aching, so being squatting to do weeding, I do like that, maybe that's part of feeling like you're a bit more alive I don't know, so that is important" 5-CSA-OT

7.7 Learning and agency

The opportunity to learn new skills at the CFOs was frequently cited by those involved as an important incentive and benefit. People tended to talk about learning in relation to food growing and this was certainly an important aspect of learning in the CFOs.

"No I think I want to get my hands into everything, well not everything, but as much as I could sort of thing…I'm trying to get some ideas you know like different weeds and stuff like that, what mustn't go into the compost bin and learning about those things. It's quite good and you know when to sow different plants and stuff. Yeah it's good I think you gain knowledge, you gain experience" 4-CG-BG

"I like the friends I've made here, I like the work, and I enjoy growing things and seeing the results of that…It's got me more active and developed a much bigger interest and plants and animals even, cos I'm now part of the bees" S4-CG-PCG

The opportunity to learn in the CSAs is in contrast to other CSA models, notably in the United States where members play a more passive role, this was noted by one member who had experience of CSA in the US.

"Yeah, that's well that was another thing for my old farm I didn't actually have to work on it at all. They just delivered every week a fresh box and then they would invite us to the farm, to see how they do things. But here Glen is, so like he told me when I go back to the states that I'll know how to keep bees and I think that, that like learning is really cool, and going back to being squeamish with the pig. I've never made bacon, but I am going to learn how to make bacon and I'm, so like who knew that I would know how to do those things. But I think when it goes back to, I'm really drawn to that homestead lifestyle, like I would want to have this vision of my kids watching me in the kitchen and I want to be the grandma who still like, cooks because I know a lot of friends who even their Grandmas even now, don't cook, everything comes out of a can and nothing is from scratch" 6-CSA-HF

Learning was not restricted to learning about food production, as can be seen from the last quote, it naturally spilled out into food preparation, but it went beyond this. The way in which learning connects to the capability and confidence to grow and prepare food is important for the agency participants gained through their involvement

"I want to, I want to feel like I could do it all myself. I want to feel like when in 10 years' time when I get my plot on the allotment waiting list I can do it all and I'll know every part of the growing process" P2-CSA-OT

The CFOs were spaces for people to learn in a much broader sense, for some the entire project was a sort of learning experience to explore how the food system could become more sustainable.

"It was really nice, it was an incredible amount of land she seemed to have and yeah the whole theory and thought behind it all sounded really good so it was just I guess, interesting to see if these things can work in practice. So quite nice to be part of something like that, to see if it can be done or not." 16-CSA-OT

Learning in this sense tended to be limited to those more politically orientated members and the founders and directors of CSAs who were expressing political agency through the project, which was discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Seeing their involvement as expressive of values they held about the food system themselves, a number of the CSA members reflected on the importance of the CFO as a learning opportunity for children.

"Well I don't know how much it changes me necessarily, but I also, I think because I'm raising two little boys I think bringing them to the farm I'm doing them a great deal. For them to see like, this is how things should be, rather than the way things always are, like that this is possible to have, like to be self-sustaining…" 6-CSA-HF

The community gardens also played an important learning role in explicitly teaching people skills that they might use to gain employment, but also regaining confidence to support their employment and re-establishing the routine of work. This is unsurprising give these aspects of participation had become key aims at the PCG project. This was less true at the Big Garden but many of the users of the garden were or had been unemployed and benefitted in similar ways to users of the PCG.

"The project very quickly became much more than just being about health and well-being because it can offer so much more and one of the key things it could offer was training people in new skills, skills for work…In the garden we offer volunteering opportunities to all the groups that I've mentioned. We run courses in gardening and horticulture and related topics, we've done pond building, bee keeping and so on so we offer skills training. Last year we ran a scheme called garden gate which was all about training people a long way from the job market or perhaps people who would never be able to get a job because of their disabilities or whatever in horticulture and confidence building...some people have gone on to get jobs in related field in caretaking or grounds maintenance or something which is brilliant. I think for people employing people if they see they've been doing something, they see they've been volunteering or participating in a course even if it's

not really related, some people have gone on to get jobs in factories or whatever it still means a lot for an employer." 11-CG-PCG-Dir

"Uh, it's definitely kept me busy, gives me something to get up for…" S19-CG-PCG

"The wildlife certainly, the opportunity to feel like I'm contributing something in life (laughs slightly) and it's brought a semblance of structure to a week as well, which is a useful thing." S11-CG-BG

As with the way in which work was experienced, learning was often quite loosely structured or completely unstructured in the case of CFOs. Therefore it frequently occurred informally or incidentally, it wasn't necessarily planned, social interaction was also critical since people didn't just learn through the projects but through one another.

"…these other sessions (preserving and skill sharing nights), it's usually like a top person teaching everybody else and they all come together. At the end of the night everybody knows how to do this thing and it's a new thing that you've done and it's um uh yeah. So it's different to whereas at the farm, you'd be working on things and helping each other out, this one is like teaching, it's like teaching a new aspect of anything um or a new aspect of the farm to other people that you might not get to do at the farm, so it's really interesting some of the nights we do." 9-CSA-HF

"I'm not, I don't feel as though I wanna go off and do a study course or anything like that. I'm really quite happy with what I'm doing and when I'm doing it and of course yes you do, you know you do learn things that's the whole point about it, but you just learn them in your own little way" 3-CG-BG

Again it is difficult to separate learning out from other themes such as the expression of agency that people could gain through their participation and their enjoyment of work. It was the activities of the CFOs which provided the context for learning but also the social interaction which created further opportunities for learning outside of the CFO. Furthermore it was through learning new growing skills that people were able to develop their relationship with the environment materially as discussed in chapter 5. This serves to underline how interrelated and mutually supporting the different aspects of participation in CFOs are in supporting well-being.

7.8 Conclusion

The feeling of agency which people experienced through their involvement in the CFOs was critical to the well-being benefits they perceived. Regaining some agency over their food was a key motivation for many, particularly in CSAs, and allowed some to express their political agency through participating

in projects that were considered antithetic to the conventional food system. This view of the CFO as alternative and preferable to the conventional was widespread. However, not all attributed such an explicit political dimension to their involvement but still gained immense satisfaction from the agency involved in producing their own food. The experience of work in the CFOs was crucial in creating this sense of satisfaction; food production activities offered concrete, practical work which had a tangible product that was consumed and enjoyed by the participants who produced it. Whilst the qualities of the product were appreciated, the work and feeling of achievement gained in producing it were arguably of greater importance. The relationship that participants had with the process and products of labour was not alienated, this was often compared favourably with unsatisfying experiences of paid labour that was alienated, where tasks are completed without a sense of purpose or immediate benefit simply as part of the duties of paid labour. The degree of freedom that interviewees reported was also important, in defining their activities within the project, in terms of work, but also in influencing the project more generally; having a stake in it. The agency experienced then is not just individual but collective due to the collective nature of production in the CFOs and necessary social interaction and bonds required to achieve this. Although peoples' stake in the projects was not clearly formalized in the structure, informally most felt a sense of duty or responsibility to their CFO. This duty might be considered burdensome, but it's difficult to see how people can express agency without some responsibility whether this is formal or not and regardless of how wide this responsibility is. The opportunity to learn within the CFOs was also important in and of itself but also in supporting people to have confidence and develop their capabilities to carry out the work in the CFO which deepened this sense of agency. Whilst I have tried to focus on the benefits of work and agency experienced through participation in this chapter it will have been apparent that it is quite difficult to separate these out from other aspects of the experience of participation. People's sense of worth in doing something productive and useful, the physical nature of work, learning alongside many other factors are integral to how work and agency are experienced. What is striking then is the way in which the

different facets of participation come together to produce an experience which is considered

beneficial for well-being in a holistic sense.

> "You've kind of got lots of benefits all combined together whereas in other aspects of life you could have some of those benefits in different areas. So you could have your exercise by going cycling, your social benefit by going to the pub. Whereas at the farm, you've got your exercise, you've got your health and nutrition, and your social aspects all combined together, which I don't think, it doesn't always happen…it's that combination is quite unique" 10-CSA-OT

Chapter 8 – Discussing the Data: Understanding wellbeing in Community Food Organisations through the lens of alienation

"It will be seen how in place of the wealth and poverty of political economy come the rich human being and the rich human need. The rich human being is simultaneously the human being in need of a totality of human manifestations of life – the man in whom his own realization exists as an inner necessity, as need." (Marx, 1959, p. 48)

Introduction

Having presented the body of the data that describes the experience of CFOs I now want to consider this data in light of the main research question, specifically the extent to which participation in CFOs might constitute an alternative organisation of labour. Although I have not sought to evaluate well-being in CFOs against a specific account of well-being, the methodology and the research questions were framed by a Marxian understanding of well-being developed in response to the literature. In chapter 2 I identified Marx's *alienation* as a fruitful concept in understanding not only the problems of the conventional food system, but also well-being in the context of CFOs. However, I also sought to build an account of well-being from the data itself, albeit my approach to collecting and interpreting the data was shaped by my understanding of the literature. The account that emerges establishes some key features of well-being in respect of the four CFOs studied: Relationship with nature,

community, a sense of agency, the organisation and experience of work. The account of participation presented here, and in the previous chapters might seem a somewhat rosy view, but in this chapter I will also reflect on some of the negative aspects that were articulated in the, data and consider potential criticisms. It should be noted that these negative aspects were not prevalent in the data, therefore were not covered in depth in the findings chapters, but they do raise some important questions. In particular the need to discuss the limitations of CFOs and how far they can be considered to constitute alternative spaces of production. Addressing this question requires us to explore how useful a Marxian approach to well-being can be in understanding the critical potential of CFOs but also more generally.

8.1 Life beyond alienation

> "We negate, but out of our negation grows a creation, an other-doing, an activity that is not determined by money, an activity that is not shaped by rules of power." (Holloway, 2012, p. 3)

The feeling of purpose or agency is in my view central to understanding what is at play in the CFOs. They provide a space where people can fulfil opportunities for self–realization, and well-being through everyday activities which are de-alienated. What is of interest and importance here is not so much alienation itself but the CFOs as spaces which exist outside it, in opposition to it, what I have referred to as de-alienated. In Marx's early writings he hinted at a view of life that could fulfil human nature rather than be destructive of it. But he did not elucidate this positive vision in any depth focussing instead on the critique of the dominant system which he considered so damaging. The focus on critique persisted in Marx's work and has persisted in the work of others who have followed in his footsteps (Brown, 1973, p. 15). I do not wish to devalue this critique, but if critique can only reflect that which it stands against then the question remains, where and what is the alternative? This is a question that refuses to go away, this can be seen in the literature on local and alternative food, with supposedly critical elements like organic, Fairtrade or local food either being reabsorbed or undermined by the dominant food system, not just materially but theoretically. This tendency of

capital to absorb elements of critique as it transforms itself is problematic if substantial change is to be realised (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2007). The literature on local and alternative food highlights how alternative articulations within the food system have been reabsorbed, but the concepts used to distinguish them are also appropriated in the name of further accumulation (Dixon, 2011; DuPuis & Goodman, 2005; Myers & Sbicca, 2015). So where can we locate 'genuine' alterity, can it be found in the everyday practices observed in these CFOs, which do not overtly frame their existence as resistance. Can we find resistance in the everyday, the mundane so to speak?

How can the construction of well-being in CFOs be understood to address alienation in the food system?

As I have argued capitalism is not absolute, not complete in its dominance of the food system or everyday life, there is a residue of the other, that which is not capital, or dominated by it. Here then we can find the practices, the values, the structures maybe for what might constitute a challenge to the hegemony of capital. What is everyday, is seemingly not political. Yet since it is through our daily activities that we reify the structures of dominance and the alienating conditions of life under capital we must consider it political (Brown, 1973, Chapter 1; Davies & Niemann, 2002). Consider the essential act of food provisioning, a loaf of bread bought from the supermarket – the patterns of industrialisation, mechanisation and globalization all driven by the need for accumulation have defined the production and consumption of that bread before it arrives in your hands. How then, can the modern (empowered) consumer reject this, move outside it? One can abstain from the rampant consumerism we are encouraged to maintain. But, with food this is difficult, it is the ultimate essential needed to sustain us. Through our sustenance though, we maintain the system, a rejection of this system must therefore include alternative forms of production and consumption. Perhaps we can turn to an alternative, more ethical consumption, but critiques of this suggest that this consumption is not always united with alternative production, undermining its claims to alterity. It does not address alienation because it does not seek to de-alienate production (Luetchford & Pratt, 2011, p. 101).

The condition of alienation is defined by the abstraction of labour; the worker from their product and from the labour process itself. But abstract labour also gives rise to an abstract or alienated consumer. Provisioned with their weekly wage, the alienated worker must meet his or her needs and wants by spending it through consumption of commodities/products/services, as abstracted as the ones they also produce through their own labour.

> "For on this premise it is clear that the more the worker spends himself, the more powerful becomes the alien world of objects which he creates over and against himself, the poorer he himself – his inner world – becomes, the less belongs to him as his own." (Marx, 1959, p. 29)

Life is not capital all the way down though, someone may spend their wages on food in the supermarket, but they may also pick strawberries from the garden, wild garlic on a walk through the woods, a fragment of the remaining commons, or perhaps they go to a community garden. We can return to Marx's concept of alienation to uncover that life activity, the everyday or otherwise which is not alienated. Marx does not spell out the opposite of alienation, but it is reflected in what we are alienated from by capitalism (Holloway, 2012, p. 89). We are alienated from *species-being* or human nature by capitalist labour. Marx specifies how he understands human nature, its essential character, to be defined by the process of labour and significantly conscious labour.

> "For labor, life activity, productive life itself, appears to man in the first place merely as a means of satisfying a need – the need to maintain physical existence. Yet the productive life is the life of the species. It is life-engendering life. The whole character of a species, its species-character, is contained in the character of its life activity; and free, conscious activity is man's species-character." (Marx 1959: 31)

Labour is defined as the life of the species, yet this is a very broad definition of labour – outside of capital Marx intends a much broader definition of work: productive life. This helps to make sense of criticisms, that Marx was not interested in labour outside of the sphere of the capitalist relations of production (Weeks, 2011, Chapter 2). Rather it is this prioritisation of this understanding of labour as the only valuable form of labour recognized by capital which Marx takes issue with in the '*Early Writings'* and beyond. Whilst capital depends on other forms of labour in the domestic sphere, to

reproduce the labour power it employs in the creation of surplus value, these non-capitalized forms are not valued in themselves. This connects to the critique that capitalism tends to undermine the conditions of its production precisely because it doesn't value them (Fraser, 2014; Moore, 2011a; O'Connor, 1988). The quote above underlines free and conscious activity as being expressive of species-being, in contrast to alienated labour. The focus on alienation is less explicit in Marx's later work, but as I pointed out in the in chapters 1 & 2, this focus can be traced to labour's double function of producing use value and exchange value, which is at the centre of his critique of political economy (Holloway, 2012, Chapter 12). If we understand the production of exchange value, and therefore surplus value and profit, as central to capital and endless accumulation then we should understand use value as being central to life activity outside of capital. The existence of both within capital somewhat muddies the waters, as this is the root of the antagonism between "alienated labour and conscious life activity" (Holloway, 2012, p. 89). Whilst use value must exist it is inescapable exchange value is not, it is a social construction.

> "The labour process…is human action with a view to the production of use-values, appropriation of natural substances to human requirements; it is the necessary condition for effecting exchange of matter between man and Nature, it is the everlasting Nature-imposed condition of human existence, and is therefore independent of every social phase of that existence, or rather it is common to every social phase." (Marx quoted in Holloway, 2012, p. 90)

Under capitalism it is the need to create exchange value that shapes useful labour. We need to look beyond production that is driven by this compulsion, if we are to envisage an alternative to alienated labour and alienated life. We must look at useful, concrete labour which does not seek to produce exchange values. There are many places we might look for this, the labour we undertake to produce our evening meal, a home-made gift, or card. But the focus of this research is the CFOs where products are made, or more accurately grown, for their use and labour is conditioned by this.

In chapter 1, I distinguished four aspects of alienation (Marx 1959, p. 29-32; see also Padgett 2007, p. 7-8): The alienation of labourer from the product of their labour; alienation from the activity of labour itself; alienation from our 'species being'; and finally alienation of individuals from one another or

social alienation. In chapter 2 I also identified important themes in the local and alternative food literature that overlapped with aspects of well-being reflected in the dimensions of alienation: Agency, relationship with nature, social bonds or community and the organisation and experience of labour. Drawing on the findings and the literature I argue that participation in CFOs can address the dimensions of alienation by enabling people to realise these aspects of well-being in response to the central question of this thesis:

How can the construction of well-being in CFOs be understood to address alienation in the food system?

Marx argues that alienation follows from the organisation of labour under capitalism, although alienation has consequences beyond the experience of labour, this is the structural condition through which it is realised. If CFOs genuinely articulate an alternative organisation of labour, then we would expect forms of alienation associated with capitalist labour not to be experienced, or certainly to a lesser degree and consequently be better for well-being. It is not straightforward to treat these four dimensions of alienation as distinct, since they are so interrelated. However in the interests of clarity I have organised the following discussion of the main research question into three sections, that broadly speaking, address the different aspects of alienation[30]. These sections are arranged according to the conceptual dimensions of alienation and the main thematic findings. In the first section the focus is on how the re-organisation of labour in CFOs, impacts on well-being, the second focuses on the social nature of this and the third on how activities within CFOs ground people and production in the natural, material context which it depends on[31]. The final section considers how the alternative structure of production in CFOs might be taken forward in a wider sense.

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[30] The two dimensions of alienation that explicitly relate to labour are collapsed into one section, which comes first.

[31] The relevance of this latter section might not be immediately apparent in the four dimensions of alienation outlined above but for Marx the natural and material context was important not just for production but also in terms of species being as I have argued elsewhere in this thesis.

8.2 Re-organizing labour

Since for Marx, alienation stems from the labour structures of capitalism it seems sensible to take this as a starting point, in considering the extent to which the experience, and organisation of work conforms to or counters this within CFOs. The alienating experience of work under capitalism is confirmed by some of the comparisons made by CFO participants between their paid work and work undertaken at the CFO. They highlight the intangible nature of paid labour, it appears abstract and seems not to serve an obvious purpose aside from receiving a wage.

> "I think a lot of people lack that kind of really tangible satisfaction in jobs um I mean so few of us do jobs that have a practically obvious point or even interaction with something you know" 2-CSA-HF-Dir

Marx describes labour under capitalism as the "activity of alienation" because it is not undertaken to satisfy a need directly but as a means of satisfying needs indirectly via wages (Marx, 1959, p. 30). This gives rise to the idea of living for the weekend, whereby pleasure or well-being is defined not through work directly but only through its ability to provide wages to be spent on provision of necessities and enjoyment of non-work activities, leisure. The inability to find self-expression through capitalist labour determines leisure time as the space of critique in everyday life for Lefebvre (Davies & Niemann; 571, Brown; 11).

> "The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself. He feels at home when he is not working, and when he is working he does not feel at home." (Marx 1959, p. 30)

However leisure time does not easily separate from the alienating structures of work, firstly it can be regarded as the necessary opportunity to rest and recuperate in order to re-enter the alienated labour of the working week. Secondly leisure time is often spent engaging in consumption of the very products and commodities that have been produced via alienated labour, shopping being defined as leisure activity (Blake et al., 2010, p. 412). The latter was not the case in CFOs where the main activity was production rather than consumption. Although clearly with CSAs there was an element of economic exchange for the food grown, this can't be regarded as consumption in the conventional

sense. The form it takes is quite different from the kind of exchange constituted in a typical economic exchange of a product for money (Hinrichs, 2000). The CSA subscription is paid without prior knowledge of the precise quantity or quality of the produce that will be received and money only makes up some of the payment the rest being contributed through labour. The poverty of conventional retail exchange was highlighted by some of the interviewees in comparison to their relationship to produce gained through the CSA.

> "I guess it's just um, it's the thinking of um, knowing how much effort went into it and not the instant gratification that you just go to the shop you exchange a bill and then you get something it's a bit rough and this um, transformation from knowing how long it took to make it happen down to your plate makes it appreciate, the appreciation is better I think for me." 5-CSA-HF

The interviewee picks up on how the alienated products typically bought are removed from them and in that sense appear less valuable (Blake et al., 2010). The first objection to leisure time as a form of critique is perhaps more likely to stick, certainly for many of those participating in CFOs it was a space of rest as well as productivity. Not necessarily in order to de-stress from their working week, since many were not working, but certainly for some this was true, more widely though they function as refuges from the alienating conditions of everyday life. It doesn't follow that we should reject them as critical forms on this basis though, and see them only as refuges, since this is not all they were (Galt et al., 2014). Clearly we need to acknowledge that these projects and spaces are not isolated from capital or its effects/affects (Crossan et al., 2016; Harris, 2009). This is reflective of the paradoxical and dialectical way in which everyday life acts as a resource for resistance and the reification of the dominant at the same time (McClintock, 2014). The double status of time spent at the CFO as leisure and productive activity did create a tension though, particularly in the CSAs where the aim of producing food was more central to the aims and organisation of the project than in CGs, as noted in chapter 4.

> "It can be a little frustrating at times, because you find that a lot of people that come, if they don't organise themselves well and there's not two of them so one of them can be looking after the children and one of them can be doing some work. They just come spend a few hours sort of well they get constantly interrupted by children needing to be taken care of or something's happened

to them and they need to so I don't think they actually get the opportunity to focus on what they want to. So I think they find it frustrating a little bit as well" 8-CSA-HF

This quote reflects different views on how time should be spent at the CSA, but also underlines the different demands on individuals in their 'leisure' time. So that whilst the person with children to look after might not approach it in the same way as someone only responsible for themselves, but they are also not able to because they have a duty to look after their child. As a parent of two small children balancing and managing these conflicting duties was something I experienced first-hand at the Oak Tree CSA. It raises the question of how people's work or contribution is then recognized or valued in a different yet fair way outside of a waged labour structure[32]. It also raises a question about the way in which wage labour acts as a competing demand on people's time, and impinges on their ability to participate in CFOs more fully. Simms and Connisbee argue for a reduced working week on the basis that this could free up time to be spent productively gardening, or at projects like the CFOs, to "cultivate a society where individuals and communities could flourish" (Conisbee & Simms, 2012, p. v). In the CSAs, interviewees were generally sympathetic to the demands on other participants, there was also a view that this needed to be balanced with the productive capacity of the CSA.

> "I know that there are some members that are really struggling to do their hours and that has a significant impact on them feeling bad about that and also on the, it has an impact on the collective's ability to um deliver the goods so that is a problem, so it's something that people need to recognize the commitment they're making if they're coming into it." 12-CSA-OT

At the CFOs labour was structured in a very different way to labour defined by capital. None of the CFOs were guided by the need to make a profit, although they all aimed to be economically sustainable, nor were those involved in the labour of producing the food defined by a wage structure, with the exception of a small amount of paid staff. Although there were paid staff at each of the CFOs the majority of labour was carried out by participants not defined by the wage relationship[33]. There

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[32] Although this is not suggest that waged labour always rewards people in a fair way.
[33] It should be noted that although there were paid staff these were not for profit enterprises therefore wages were not dependent on the creation of profit. In the case of CSAs members paid the staff via the exchange of the produce they received although there was an element of charitable funding and this along with public money paid for community garden staff.

was no impetus to create surplus value from the labour of those producing food within CFOs, although that didn't take away the need to work hard to produce food. Work at the CFO was considered concrete, tangible and practical, participants gained a sense of satisfaction from the work which they were putting in because they could not only see the results of it, but also see the purpose of it.

> "I like to use my hands, um and this is very good, like I was describing the discussion. So it's nice to be able to have the combination of you do very practical, manual, concrete work and you have this exchange, with interesting people and at the end of it there's a produce coming, it's lovely." 5-CSA-HF

Seeds were planted and cared for, weeded and watered with a view to producing something that could be consumed by those who had produced it; work was directed towards use value – a product which directly met their needs. Therefore the labour process and product were not alienated in the context of CFOs, they had use value for those producing it. The residue of this de-alienated labour was carried on the products themselves in their physical characteristics, changing the relationship between the consumer and producer in comparison to conventionally sourced food.

> "I love knowing, like seeing where it comes from instead of having it all like pretty packaged in the store. There's sometimes when I just wish it was you know not having to pluck something out, but because I see the dirt it instantly brings me back to what it was on the farm, like I know exactly where you came from You can see it and I like that I can see it here and I see it back home." 6-CSA-HF

The way in which labour was structured completely changes the experience of it for those participating in CFOs, this was evident in the last chapter. The CFOs brought the participants as consumers into the act of production, whilst this was beneficial, it also exposed them to reality of the production process. The small scale nature of food production at the CFOs is labour intensive and as the following quote highlights, this could be demanding.

> "Um, I mean I wouldn't naturally think that I'm a, I'm not a hard worker, can I admit that? No like you know, there's oh I complain and I whine and like 'uh my back's hurting' and whatever, but um you know you only do it for so long and I feel fine. I mean I, we're posting those poles and I mean I had blisters by the end of it and I probably only did like four. And when Glen told me they had done it and one winter it's all they did, was just putting posts in I was like oh... even milking the goat, my thumbs are not strong enough, um so yeah, I'll still probably whine and complain about it, but it's just part, this is what I signed up for, I know what's expected." 6-CSA-HF

However, this level of involvement in the labour process was important, creating a sense of satisfaction in work and forming bonds between participants. They developed camaraderie through adversity, and as the interviewee acknowledges there was an expectation that participation would involve this. This along with the non-profit driven nature of production contributed to instilling a sense of satisfaction which is often lacking from paid work, although we should be wary of over claiming. The sense of pride people feel in their work is not limited to work outside of capitalist production, but whilst it is possible to enjoy work under capitalism, that is not its primary intention - it doesn't define labour. The kind of artisanal production which we're more likely to consider fulfilling can hardly be considered to typify capitalist labour (Thurnell-Read, 2014). High quality and high cost artisanal food products are in fact held up as a part of resistance to the wider tendency of the food system (Forssell & Lankoski, 2014; Sonnino & Marsden, 2006, p. 182). These are indeed expressive of counter tendencies a rejection of mass produced uniform products and the stultifying labour that produces them (Vidal, 2013). But they have proved vulnerable to re-absorption into the system, unable to escape the strictures of capitalist labour (Dixon, 2011; Myers & Sbicca, 2015). It could also be argued that this kind of craft work is not the only source of pleasure in labour under capital. There are three things that I would point to in response. Firstly, we should also be aware of how our enjoyment of labour (and the products it creates) is also shaped by the wider ideological framework in which we live. The need to convince people of their satisfaction in their jobs should be seen as central not only to their continuing doing them, but also their productivity (see Oswald, Proto, & Sgroi, 2015 for example) in order to realise and expand the accumulation of surplus value. Secondly, people fulfilling jobs that are considered rewarding are also rewarded financially by their wages, usually much more generously than those doing more menial tasks, this acts as a form of compensation. How many rewarding jobs might lose their charm if the wages received for them were cut in half? Finally we should recall the two fold nature of labour, work creates exchange value for capital but it also creates use value for society. If we accept this productive activity as our defining life activity then it is not hard to see how it might be satisfying on any level, even though it is alienating at the same time.

Work outside of wage labour does not exert the same kind of motivational force that paid work does, although a lack of motivation was sometimes identified by interviewees, the benefits of participation tended to override this.

> "yeah it's a bit of a struggle some Saturday mornings to actually get out there and get out, but once I'm out there I've always enjoyed, pretty much always felt good when I've come back, almost without question, um that's true of most, almost most hobbies that you do" 7-CSA-HF

> "Sometimes I may feel tired and wonder if I have the energy to go to the farm, but I always come away feeling energised and revitalised with a feeling that I'm doing something worthwhile." S32-CSA-OT

In both of these quotes the value of spending time at the CFO is identified as a counterweight to a lack of enthusiasm. As the first quote points out this is not something which is limited to the CFO. People might also report similar feelings toward their paid work at one time or another, therefore this lack of motivation seems to be expressive of a wider tendency, of course in paid work one potential way of addressing a lack of motivation or commitment can be through greater financial rewards. Cleary this is not an option within CFOs where labour must reward participants through the food they receive, or through the experience of participation itself. It is difficult to see this as a shortcoming of the way in which production is organised in CFOs. Participants are motivated not just by the use value of the food they produce, but the value they see in participating in CFOs more generally. Unlike the double nature of capitalist labour which produces use value and exchange value, labour at the CFOs produces just use value. The use values it produces go beyond food, it meets other human needs, providing opportunities for meaningful and sociable work amongst other benefits.

In the CFOs the organisation of labour departs from the alienating structures exhibited in capitalism, by removing exchange value it underlines how beneficial rebuilding a direct relationship with the context of food production can be. Despite much talk of addressing disconnection within the literature on local and alternative food there has been little attempt to consider the potential of genuinely re-engaging people with the context of production or spaces that do this (Jackson, Ward, & Russell, 2009; Kneafsey et al., 2013, p. 19; McClintock, 2010). There has been plenty of focus on how to bring

consumers closer to producers via 'alternative' institutional forms like farmers markets (Conner et al., 2010; Kirwan, 2004; Pascucci et al., 2011), or direct selling schemes (Hinrichs, 2000; Selfa & Qazi, 2005) or communicating to consumers through labels, such as Fairtrade (Brown & Getz, 2008; Cramer et al., 2014; Dubuisson-Quellier & Lamine, 2008) or PDOs (Mancini, 2013). Studies though that consider the labour experience as distinct in some forms of alternative and local food are few and far between (See Schoneboom & May, 2013, for a rare example) and tend to overlook the way in which this might challenge the organising logic of the mainstream food system. Whilst the work of gardening or tending vegetables in an allotment or community garden context might be seen as beneficial for its physical (van den Berg et al., 2010) or mental health (Milligan, Gatrell, & Bingley, 2004), this organisation of work is not framed as a challenge to capitalism and the way it structures activity through labour. I will return to the extent to which this can function as a challenge later, but I now want to consider the other ways in which CFOs address alienation.

8.3 Re-socializing labour

In themes 2 and 3 I drew attention to the central role that work played in annotating social interaction within the CFOs. According to Marx social estrangement or alienation from one another follows as a result of the alienation of labour. Work as defined by wage labour is individualistic; it is defined not by a collective goal but by the individual aim of meeting needs via wages, rather than collective needs (Marx, 1959, p. 32). The collective nature of work at the CFOs meant that labour required social interaction and was shaped by collective aims as opposed to being individualistic.

> "I don't have the feeling that ah okay Glen is in charge but everybody has a vested interest in making it work here (the CSA). At work I'm not so sure it's more personal, there is personal interest in being here but I feel maybe I'm a little bit naive, but I feel there is a bit more interest in being the community working well here, not so sure about work.. Because there's no hierarchy here and there's no career progression. Here so there's no sense of wanting to go on top of everybody else so I don't have that feeling here, which is quite refreshing." 5-CSA-HF

The accounts of many of the participants at the CFOs, particularly those out of work or retired, suggested that involvement in the CFO could replace social interaction that had previously been

realsied through paid work, suggesting that the social nature of production in CFOs is not particularly unique However, the way in which retirement and unemployment cut people off from *social* interactions by the termination of an *economic* relationship, suggests that social benefits are incidental and superseded by economic concerns. As Polanyi has argued:

> "Instead of economy being embedded in social relations, social relations are embedded in the economic system." (Polanyi, 1944, p. 60)

The alienation someone might experience through job loss or retirement is a manifestation of how social relationships are embedded in the economy, and assume primacy over the social. Clearly work brings people into a similar context and creates an opportunity, and to some extent a need for social interaction, whether this is paid or otherwise. But under conventional paid labour economic considerations take precedence.

> "I don't have a focus in my life especially now, now that, because work became my life almost unfortunately, which was ok in a lot of ways… and that's taken away relatively suddenly. I knew it was coming, but I hadn't bargained on it for a few years, ideally and so and so all of a sudden you do need things like that" S17-CG-BG

The CFOs brought people together through the activities of food production, but people weren't brought into this labour context because of the need to earn money, but because of a desire to be involved with the CFO. Participants were a self-selected group, even at the CGs where some participants were brought in via placements, it was up to individuals to opt in to these placements. Although people's interests play a role in influencing their career choices their job choice is shaped by a range of other factors, not least the need to earn a wage. Whereas self-selection in CFO participation tended to ensure some commonality of interests between people, which fostered social interaction and friendship, in a way paid work might not.

> "Yeah, because you have, everybody's come together for this one reason, because you like the idea of the farm. You want to get out um, so you always find like-minded people. Um and whereas your jobs or who you are, like your age. They are a bunch of people who I'd never have met um just because they have jobs in Cambridge and I only go to college or they go to a different college to me, um, but and even though they're very like-minded if the farm wasn't there I would have never met them, I wouldn't have even known they existed but now I'm really good friends with them and it's a really close knit community." 9-CSA-HF

Social connections within the CFOs were not dependent on attracting people with common values, the structure of production itself required social connection. Although many people were brought into the project because of an interest in food this was not always the case and different values did not necessarily act as a barrier to social relationships. As work was not individualised but had shared goals this created social bonds through labour that would not otherwise have been created.

> "I can talk to people down at the allotment, but it's not the same cos they're all doing their own things, it's not all sort of co-mingled, like it is at the CSA... Some people planted the parsnips and other people weeded them and other people will harvest them. Yeah and I just like that mix, we're all in it together pretty much and I'd miss that" P1-CSA-OT

It is not just production, but also consumption that is social at the CFOs, in that the produce being grown is not intended for sale or exchange, but for collective use. In contrast, abstraction or alienation characterizes social relations under capital, since most of our 'social' acts are in fact abstract economic exchanges.

> "What appear to be impersonal economic laws of the market operating between commodities, between things, are in fact alienated social relations between their producers, between people. They are the social form of human creative activity, but in an alien and external form." (Sayers, 2011, p. 94)

Marx considered the condition of alienation to be a feature of capitalist society (Marx, 1959, p. 45) not just labour, but labour itself is central, because productive life activity is considered to define *species being*. The importance of work in structuring social interaction can be seen in how people tended to compare it with the social occasions connected with the CFOs. Whilst these were regarded as enjoyable they weren't considered fundamental to what people gained through their involvement. The word community frequently came up in the interviews, it was the collective goals of the CFO combined with the communal working practices that established this rather than communal social occasions, which were more like the icing on the cake. The way in which social connections are built tallies with existing literature on local and alternative food which has sought to highlight how it might re-socialize the economy of food. However, this has tended to emphasize relationships between producers (Murdoch et al., 2000) or the role of different forms of local food such as farmers markets

in creating enhanced trust and social interaction between producers and consumers (Feagan & Morris, 2009; Hinrichs, 2000). Few studies have examined forms of alternative and local food which offer an alternative organisation of production as the CFOs do, and the social benefits arising from this.

The idea that the experience of the CFOs was somehow more real or authentic seems to link to the idea of a falseness or fake-ness of the dominant food system (Pratt, 2007; Schnell, 2013). This is conveyed in the tagline for the OT website 'Join the *real* local food revolution!' (Oak Tree, 2017. Emphasis added)[34] but there is a wider sense in which this disconnect and reconnection is expressed.

> "I'm in the office then it's all computer based stuff so you know it's nice to actually just leave that behind and do something that connects you more with reality" 8-CSA-HF

In this quote conventional work is seen to be removed from reality unlike the CSA which is expressive of a more genuine experience also reflected in the following extract:

> "Most interesting almost was a new member who simply described the farm as real and genuine. This was compared to other projects which didn't seem to reflect what she'd expected. In contrast this really was/is community supported agriculture and it could be done, you could do it." Extract from field diary 3/7/2014 Oak Tree CSA AGM

The emphasis on (re)connection in the literature on alternative and local food has pointed to the need to bridge production and consumption (Goodman & DuPuis, 2002) and sought to underline the need to re-socialise the food system through alternative and local food systems (Kneafsey et al., 2008). This has frequently been understood under the concept of embeddedness which draws on Polanyi (1944). Polanyi aimed to emphasize how economic relations became disembedded under capitalism with damaging consequences.

> "The organisation of the whole of society on the principle of gain and profit must have far-reaching effects…But a principle quite unfavorable to individual and general happiness was wreaking havoc with his social environment, his neighborhood, his standing in the community, his craft; in a word, with those relationships to nature and man in which his economic existence was formerly embedded." (Polanyi, 1944, pp. 134-5)

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[34] See top of webpage page for tagline.

Granovetter's work which built on Polanyi drew attention to how social relationships overlay and to some extent define economic relationships (Granovetter, 1985). Consequently much of the work on embeddedness has tended to focus on more 'sociable' market forms (Sage, 2003). There has been little attention then, to how alternative structures of labour like those seen in the CFOs studied might contribute a different kind of embedding. Instead the focus of analysis has been on the re-socialising of more standard economic relationships between producers and consumers through local markets and certification schemes which embed economic relations with local actors (Feagan, 2007; Trubek & Bowen, 2008). However the way in which these forms of local and alternative food are embedded has not extricated them from the wider dominant economic framework. There is also a need to move beyond understanding how different crystallizations of the food system are embedded and consider the implications of this. This requires some kind of evaluation, of which a well-being approach can form the basis. Marx emphasized the de-socialised nature of labour under capitalism precisely because it was at odds with humanity's essentially socially nature and therefore detrimental to well-being. Man's social nature being core to what Marx describes as *species being* essentially human nature which he is alienated from through capitalist labour. Within the argument that capitalism is antithetical to our species being is the claim that it is detrimental to our well-being, since what goes against our human nature must be bad for well-being.

> "Only on the basis of a specific concept of man's nature can Marx make the difference between true and false needs of man." (Fromm, 1967, p. 62)

8.4 Re-building a productive relationship with nature

The concept of well-being is central if not explicitly spelled out by Marx in either his exposition of alienation or critique of capitalism. The latter hinges on the view that it is damaging to well-being and the former on a conception of humanity which cannot be realised under the alienating conditions of capitalism. This conception of humanity also extends to an inherent connection with nature, although to describe it in this way suggests a binary division between society and nature which Moore argues against (Moore, 2011b) and Marx did not intend (1959, p. 31). As we saw in chapter 5, CFOs facilitated

a meaningful relationship with nature which went beyond a passive experience of pristine nature (Wittman, 2009). The active relationship with the material environment embodied in cultivating land was significant for participants of CFOs. The CFOs created opportunities to 'commune' with nature, but also enabled expression of agency which fostered a sense of place. The data suggests that it was not only about reconnecting to an external nature (Dowler et al., 2009), but that this was expressive of a human nature continuous with external nature.

> "So many people won't understand exactly what needs to be grown where, because they aren't in touch with their gardens, or aren't in touch with their local environment and it's something that's so easy to do. You can just find out, oh when does everything want to be planted, what things are planted in what soil and then you just have to work at it for a few years will put you in touch with your garden or your local area, your allotment." 9-CSA-HF

Although several of the interviewees talked of connecting to nature in a spiritual way it was the way CFOs brought them into an active engagement with nature, through embodied practices of food production, that they emphasized (Milligan et al., 2004; Turner, 2011). Whilst Marx defines human nature in terms of species being, he does not see this as removed from wider extra-human nature, rather it is through our life activity that this relationship to nature is solidified in practice and in consciousness (Marx, 1959, p. 31). The embedding of humanity in nature is entwined with our social nature, this means that the way in which we interact with, and view nature, is also defined socially.

> "The human aspect of nature exists only for social man; for only then does nature exist for him as a bond with man – as his existence for the other and the other's existence for him – and as the life-element of human reality…Thus society is the complete unity of man with nature – the true resurrection of nature – the consistent naturalism of man and the consistent humanism of nature." (Marx 1959, p. 44)

What is elsewhere described as the metabolic interaction between humanity and nature is also socially determined, this gives rise to the rift with nature that is seen in capitalism, and is readily observed in the food system (McClintock, 2010; Moore, 2010). The abstraction of nature in the context of production is apparent in the increasing industrialisation and technological development that creates seeds in laboratories and seeks to turn fields into factories (Smith, 2007, p. 31). The extraction from and management of natural elements, intended to realise greater and more reliable production,

is central to realising more surplus value, albeit such endeavours are often justified by the argument for food security (Tomlinson, 2011). Agricultural production though is difficult to extricate from its natural basis (Marx 1959, p. 41; Fromm, 1967, p. 16). This was noted by some of the participants in CFOs who talked of the essential nature of food and food production.

> "There's something quite primitive and primal about the connection with the earth and you've grown this and now it's on your plate and it's full of goodness, something deeply healthy and nourishing, nourishes more than body." S27-CSA-OT

This quality of food was something not readily seen in the conventional offerings, which were rejected for their conformity to some kind of industrial standard in favour of more 'natural' produce.

> "I think it's quality and there's something about um well local food tends to be less you know, less messed round with, tends to be you know, it may not be organic, it may not be certified organic, but it tends to be you know it comes in natural shapes and sizes and colours you know and it's not all uniform" P1-CSA-OT

Local and alternative food has been valorised through certification schemes (AOCs and PDOs, for example), which have sought to capture unique physical properties and aspects of production, supposedly expressed in locally produced food (Feagan, 2007; Goodman & DuPuis, 2002; Sundbo, 2013). However, this form of valorisation also tends to fetishize local and alternative food (Connelly et al., 2011, p. 314; Morris & Kirwan, 2011; Pratt, 2007) whereas the CFOs bring consumers into the material context of production. Rather than communicating the realities of production via labelling or certification they actively involve people in the act of production via active engagement with the natural, material elements involved (Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007).

The data captures the way in which people felt alienated in the context of the food and how CFOs addressed this. A more general alienation or disconnect was rarely articulated, although there were some glimpses of a more systemic alienation in the data.

> "I need to be honest about this, a lot of the time I do eat food in a utilitarian way, because I'm very much embroiled and part of the problems I described earlier in this interview I don't see myself as separate from all that malaise that I described, that malaise is very much inside of me it's part of me, it's part of my thinking all those errors that I alluded to earlier it's very much part of me and in my thinking, so if I reflect deeply on the reality of my relationship with food I do tend to just eat

things as fuel um and I think I talked about the gap in not preparing food is probably key in that actually. So at an emotional level I've got a journey to go on there but at an intellectual level there is that gap." CSA-12-OT

Although this person is part of a CSA and conscious of the alienation of food from its natural context, they also refer to a much wider tendency that continues to shape their actions and understanding of food, despite their view that this is problematic. In the opening chapter of this thesis I referred to the unreflexive consumption that is typical of many people's experience of eating, here this CFO participant acknowledges this, despite their involvement in a form of production that seeks to re-embed consumption in production. This suggests a cultural barrier to the growth of such organisations that will be difficult to break down. If those who are involved are aware of the influence of the wider context and how it undermines the value of participation, then those outside of the CFO may prove hard to reach.

Over the course of the last three sections I have provided an account of participation in CFOs to address the main research question:

How can the construction of well-being in CFOs be understood to address alienation in the food system?

I have drawn extensively on Marx's conception of alienation to understand the construction of well-being in CFOs. It is clear that people's involvement in CFOs was experienced as beneficial to their well-being in a rage of ways, but there is a further question as to how the de-alienation we see here might be taken forward in the food system and more widely still. I turn my attention to this issue in the final section of this discussion.

8.5 Producing well-being: CFOs as spaces of alternative production

Critical to the benefits of CFOs is their organisation around the collective production of food which defines the experience of participation. What is equally clear, in Marx's critique of the alienating effects of capitalism, is the negative impact the organisation of production has on human well-being.

Holloway (2012, see Ch. 12 and 24 especially) describes the antithesis of abstract, alienated labour as *concrete doing*, this exists under capitalism as use value versus exchange value. So there is an antagonism between these two forms of value within capital. Concrete doing is not just contained within capitalism though, it overflows it, it describes activity that is done for the sake of doing it well (Holloway, 2012, Chapter 24). The accounts of those participating at the CFOs speak of pleasure in doing concrete work, tasks which individuals can see the purpose of, in contrast to the frustration of abstract, paid labour. Whilst we can look to the tension within capital it is perhaps more fruitful to look beyond it, outside of the container to understand the potential for change. Centuries of critique have had little impact on the durability of capitalism, warnings of crisis, self-induced and otherwise have failed to materialize. Rather capitalism has drawn on critique to sustain and transform itself, legitimating its continued dominance by absorbing critiques of its detractors (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2007, see pp. 27-8 esp.) and evolving through crisis as Moore argues (Moore, 2011b). The danger is that we end up "waiting for the revolution" whilst the dominant system endures (Brown, 1973, p. 15).

Holloway's concrete doing is one way of describing that which negates capital, but as he acknowledges, it also appropriates it: "Abstract labour is the historical form in which concrete doing exists under capitalism." (2012, p. 172). The idea of concrete doing or simple pleasure in an activity itself is not sufficient to describe either what we see in people's enjoyment of CFOs or what Marx intended as a counter to the alienation of capitalism. What Marx talks of is self-realization and through that, the realization of human need, this is what he considers true wealth as the quote that began this chapter pointed to. What emerges from the *Economic & Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* is a concept of human beings as self-conscious and social, whose defining life activity is free productive labour in order to meet a need through interaction with nature, which they are not just contingent upon but constitutive of. Whilst Marx centres his philosophical position and his critique of capital on human nature and human need, this can also be seen to constitute an account of well-being. Since if we are going to take seriously claims about the denial of human need, or its full realization as some kind of alternative, then it must follow that we consider the former bad and the latter good for our well-being.

Therefore, we need to look beyond how concrete doing might stand in opposition to abstract labour, and look to the values and structures that underpin an alternative organisation of production. This is particularly important when we consider that concrete doing is also subsumed within the structures of capitalism, and not easily extricated.

The resurgent discourse around well-being might offer us some hope as a source for critique of capital and its damaging effects. It does after all suggest an orientation around different values than those central to economic production and efficiency, although we need to be mindful of the limitations of the current discourse as I argued in Chapters 1 and 2. Marx's notion of species being might seem a somewhat narrow basis for well-being but he does not attempt to describe an account of well-being as such, rather he focuses on the essential aspects of human nature and how these are alienated by capitalism. He distinguished between constant needs e.g. food, and socially defined needs e.g. money, although how constant needs are met is socially defined (Fromm, 1967, p. 25-26). However, he did not elucidate these human needs in any detail, therefore the concept of well-being contained within alienation needs expanding. Clearly we need to acknowledge that conceptions of well-being are socially constructed and can be interpreted in various ways, but this doesn't mean they have no value or legitimacy. Individual-centred, subjective accounts of well-being seemingly avoid this problem by leaving the definition of well-being up to individuals themselves. As I have discussed earlier in this thesis, this kind of approach is not without problems and does in fact depend on a specific view of human nature, which is in itself an objective claim. They tend to prioritise individual freedom of choice to pursue happiness over other considerations, as opposed to approaches to well-being which attempt to define central human goods. In reality all theories of well-being rely on some kind of account of human nature, whether it is explicit or not (Haybron, 2008, Chapter 1; Scott, 2012, p. 16). The major advantage of a Marxian approach is that the organisation of labour is central. Making labour central highlights how the capitalist organisation of labour is destructive of well-being, and how an alternative organisation of well-being might be centred on producing use value; that is, the realisation of human need or well-being.

The current discourse on translating well-being into policy is dominated by an individualistic view that typically manifests itself in the form of individual solutions, such as the mass provision of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (Marzillier & Hall, 2009). The ambition of enhancing the well-being of citizens or individuals is seemingly a noble and democratic aim that would be hard to dispute, except that if taken seriously this comes into conflict with the economic priorities that define production and consumption. This puts the state and other political actors in a conflicted position; on the one hand many states espouse the intention of policy aimed at improving well-being on the other few would disavow the accepted economic orthodoxy that growth is good[35]. We can see why a more individualised psychological account of well-being is more acceptable to many political actors involved in this discourse, because it ignores the structural inequalities that influence well-being. It fits more closely with an economic ontology of a society of atomised individual actors and locates the responsibility for well-being with them, the state's role moving into the background as a sort of facilitator. This avoids any messy confrontation with the forces of production and their role in supporting well-being, other than the need to provide wages for individuals to realise their own well-being[36].

I have argued that CFOs stand as alternative spaces of production to the dominant food system, but some critics have suggested they are complicit with a retrenchment of the welfare state, associated with modern capitalism:

> "During the contemporary era, the proliferation of such projects [community gardens] is associated with what Peck and Tickell (2002) call ''roll-out'' neoliberalism when voluntary and third sector initiatives organized around principles of self-improvement and moral responsibility stand in for state sponsored social policies and programs premised on collective responses to social risk." (Pudup, 2008, p. 1229)

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[35] With the exception perhaps of Bhutan that has taken the ideal of organising policy around well-being much more seriously although is far from immune to the forces of capital. http://www.gnhcentrebhutan.org/what-is-gnh/the-story-of-gnh/

[36] This is consistent with the more general ambition of capitalism to foreclose other opportunities for productive activity and "present wage labor as the only survival strategy available to human beings." (Figueroa, 2013, p. 9; House & Figueroa, 2015)

This critique suggests that spaces like the CFOs might fit with the individualised notion of well-being that is driving policy, rather neatly. Conceptualised as such they can provide well-being services to underwrite the social costs of capitalism, shifting some of the cost on to the voluntary sector and away from the state (Pudup, 2008). There is an element of truth in this, both the garden projects involved in this research received referrals from social and health services, although it should be acknowledged that a significant proportion of funding also came through the state. However, these spaces function as more than that and it is not clear that the CSAs studied could be understood in this way. Others have acknowledged the complicit role CGs play whilst also arguing they "can work towards reconstituting a relationship—long fragmented by the impositions of capitalism—between one another, our environment and the products of that relationship" (Crossan et al., 2016, p. 4 see also; Ghose & Pettygrove, 2014; McClintock, 2014). The data collected in this study bears out this argument, whilst these spaces absorb some of the social costs of capital they are also cultivating a different kind of subjectivity. It is not possible to neatly separate alternatives, as forms of critique, from the dominant food system they seek to undermine as Boltanksi & Chiapello observe ""Frequently the same paradigms find themselves engaged in condemnation and justification of what is condemned." (2007, p. 20). In the case of CSAs this is arguably more pronounced because they exist more explicitly as an alternative space of production, rather than as well-being resources to offset the social cost of capital. These spaces are in and of themselves effective in meeting food needs and a whole host of other human needs. However, when they do not meet all participants' food needs, the question remains as to their ability to question the capitalist mode of production more widely. We can look to these everyday spaces though to uncover the values and way in which labour might be organised more widely.

> "Everyday life as an ongoing, living process is continually "leaking out the sides," so to speak, of capitalist structures; its "residue" falling beyond the attempts of abstraction and alienation to contain it. In the residue, one could catch glimpses of fragments and possibilities for a life not dominated by alienated social relations." (House & Figueroa, 2015, p. 505)

The possibility of re-organizing the food system around well-being has been explored by the New Economics Foundation where they also consider what this would mean in terms of measuring success as compared to how it is currently measured in the UK food system (Devlin, Dosch, Esteban, & Carpenter, 2014). There has also been recognition at the United Nations level that the current food system emphasis on production is failing in terms of well-being:

> "A new paradigm focused on well-being, resilience and sustainability must be designed to replace the productivist paradigm and thus better support the full realization of the right to adequate food." (Schutter, 2014, p. 13).

Despite these critiques, that have underlined the enormity of the challenges facing the food system and calls for a new paradigm, there has been little evidence of a shift in terms of food policy (Lang, Barling, & Caraher, 2009; Lang, 2009). Setting out the problems of the contemporary food system and arguing for a way forward Lang draws on the notion of 'ecological public health' (Lang, 2009). The concept draws attention to the way in which food is the result of relationships and actions, both material and social, which connect human health to extra-human nature. This establishes key dimensions of health in much the same way I have argued for well-being. These arguments need to be connected up with the well-being agenda that is currently garnering attention in policy circles, but the case needs to be made for structural change rather than just individual change (Lang, 2009). The extension of the logic of production that we find in these spaces beyond the community level might seem unrealistic. However, there are glimpses of what this might look like, and this does not necessarily mean a rejection of markets or exchange, but it will require different rules of engagement, different values which determine how markets are defined by our interaction with and within them:

> "Our starting point is not the process of capitalist appropriation, but how people create a different kind of food network and modulate their encounter with the market." (Luetchford & Pratt, 2011, p. 90)

Luetchford & Pratt's case study examines "an example of an organization that both provides an alternative food chain and is seriously 'oppositional' in its politics", in the form of an organic farming co-operative. The "vision of a world where capitalism does not rule" that is presented suggests that

alternative production is possible, but the values that support the structures of this production need to be spread more widely (Luetchford & Pratt, 2011, p. 102).

The agency of the individual is key to the appeal of capitalism (Harvey, 2005, Chapter 1) and the liberal, individualised conception of well-being, yet this is an illusion an appearance of freedom or a freedom with constraints. Few people have the freedom to articulate a different mode of production (and therefore consumption). In most spheres of their life activity, they are constrained to the consumption options offered by the market place. If they do decide they want to break from the dominant then they must find the resources and opportunity to do so. For people participating in the CSA this means finding the time to contribute their work share as well as ensuring they have the necessary money to meet their needs, almost certainly through waged labour of some form. The CG participants must also find the time, taking it out of the 'working week' this also constitutes an ideological barrier; how does one rationalise spending a day or half a day at a community garden? This relates to the cultural barriers discussed in the previous sections, how do we measure the value of time spent at the garden against a day's paid labour? For this commitment they will receive an indeterminate amount of vegetables, of an as yet unknown quality when they could potentially be earning x amount. The same is true for the CSA, although here the work contribution tends to come out of people's leisure time. The question becomes how does one justify spending leisure time working, particularly when there is a need for rest before the 'working week' begins? Is this a cost effective use of leisure time, does it offer value for money so to speak? This is the tension, the antagonism between use value and exchange value, the antagonism between concrete doing and abstract labour. This tension can also be seen in the case study of the organic farming co-operative discussed above, who must find a market for their produce at an acceptable price in competition with conventional production (Luetchford & Pratt, 2011, p. 101; see also Connelly et al., 2011).

If the case is to be made for why someone would take the time to participate in one of the CFOs, to engage in alternative production, it can't be done according to the values of capitalism, it must be

done in the interests of well-being. When considered in this way participation in the CFO can be considered to be creating much more value individually (and socially), than they are losing by not participating. The difficulty of departing from the dominant mode of organisation is that approaches to well-being are also dominated by it, and that alternative must survive in a context dominated by the capitalist mode of organisation. Therefore we can only see fragments of resistance or alternatives, these need to be pieced together if they are to be built upon, but what is also required is a 'reform of consciousness' (Brown, 1973, p. 16). What is also needed is a much better articulation of alternatives, something which has been lacking in the local and alternative food literature to date (Figueroa, 2013, p. 2). A well-being framework can be helpful in achieving this, but only if it is integrated with an understanding of how structural factors limit people's opportunities for well-being and how people's understanding of well-being is informed by the wider social context.

Breaking from this dominant way of thinking is not straightforward, Marx was aware of the way in which capitalism was reified through the everyday acts of consumption and production (Holloway, 2012, Brown, 1973, Ch. 1). This appears a conscious act which is at odds with Marx's criticism that capital denies human beings of the opportunity of conscious life activity in the realization of their needs. However, Marx considered alienation to be general in that alienation is not just experienced by individuals, but that capitalist society is alienating us from our species being, via the structures of production and consumption. Whilst this is the structural realization of an individual alienated condition, Marx connects this to a much more general alienation in society, what he describes as the 'general consciousness': "...although at the present day *general* consciousness is an abstraction from real life and as such confronts it with hostility" (Marx, 1959, p.45, emphasis in original). This is perhaps why Lefebvre identifies non-conscious alienation as the worst kind (Lefebvre, 2002, p. 208), because to be unconscious of it is not to recognize it. It could be argued that most people willingly accept this alienation, that they know they are only working for a wage, but accept it in exchange for the material comfort it brings us. However, this seems a weak argument. Although we all need and benefit from the use value of the various products we consume there are numerous things beyond this that also

give us satisfaction in life. Furthermore, we have little option but to accept the imposition of wage labour as part of the dominant mode of production (House & Figueroa, 2015, p. 504). There is a further question about how we might make sense of counter tendencies expressed in spaces like the CFOs. Is it creditable to suggest they represent a more impoverished experience than rampant consumerism? Holloway points out that abstraction or alienation is not necessarily automatic or integral to exchange, but acknowledges it exists as a strong tendency (Holloway, 2012, p. 94). He discusses this through the example of a cake baker, but we can think of this through the example of a gardener also. Consider the person who exchanges some produce from their allotment or their garden with their neighbour in return they receive a bottle of wine or are invited for a meal. The enjoyment this person finds in growing the produce and exchanging it in this way is liable to be altered quite radically if they then decided to grow food for a living, by becoming a market gardener. The reality of this was confronted by the initiator of the Oak Tree CSA who found the translation of interest into an economic enterprise shaped her experience of labour to the extent that the original market garden she set up wasn't sustainable and the CSA emerged from this context. This suggests that it is not necessarily exchange which generates this abstraction, but the logic underlying it. In the example of the gardener, exchange is originally incidental to the production, it is only when it becomes instrumental it is problematic; surplus value must be realised in exchange, for it to be viable, overriding use value, furthermore for it to be viable it must be competitive with the rest of the market.

8.6 Conclusion

I have presented the experience of participating in CFOs, documented by ethnographic fieldwork and qualitative interviewing, as contributing to people's well-being in a range of ways. Countering the alienating tendencies of the dominant food system it enables people to build meaningful relationships with each other, the natural context of production and to engage in productive work which has meaning and purpose to them. These factors combine to give people a sense of agency, that they have some control over how they meet their food needs and that they are not confined to the

unsatisfactory offerings of the dominant food system. The contribution of CFOs needs to be seen in terms of well-being, the idea of food as fuel (for humans or otherwise) as referred to in one quote from a CFO participant reflects a view of food as commodity, an input. Measured in these terms the CFOs do not deliver anything close to the (exchange) value of the conventional food system, this was alluded to in some comments from participants about low yields.

> "what I do want to say is that even though my veg box in particular isn't what I expected, or what I had hoped for based on like my old farm I mean it had been well established, so my like carrots are like giant carrots because they've cultivated the land and they've worked it for so long and this one is just still on its roots so my little carrots are just learning like how to grow, um so I could have been just like you know what, what I'm paying each month I'm not receiving in my produce but I'm receiving *so much more*" 6-CSA-HF (emphasis added)

According to the logic of capital the model of production in CFOs is inefficient, but as this interviewee says they are receiving so much more. Given that these CFOs are not driven by the desire to maximise production, in the pursuit of profit, this is not surprising. Only a well-being perspective can reveal the value that CFOs produce including, and beyond, the food. However, well-being, like alternative and local food will only be effective in driving a shift from the damaging model of production and consumption that dominates the food system if it is a critically informed. I have put forward a Marxian approach which draws on the concept of alienation to unite a positive articulation of well-being with the necessary critical understanding of the organisation of production under capital. Focussing on productive activity does not mean we should overlook the mundane, the everyday since daily events are the "internalization of fundamental underlying guiding forces." (Harvey, 2006, p.86). Therefore we can see the seeds of an alternative way of organising production in the everyday.

> "In other words social change is not produced by activists, however important activism may (or may not) be in the process. Social change is rather the outcome of the barely visible transformation of the daily activities of millions of people." (Holloway, 2012, p. 12)

Although I have interpreted these spaces as representative of an alternative organisation of production and a potential basis for challenging the dominant food system they remain embedded in this context as McClintock observes:

> "Not only is urban agriculture both radical and neoliberal, I argue that it has to be both. It would not arise as a viable social movement without elements of both, insofar as contradictory processes of capitalism both create opportunities for urban agriculture and impose obstacles to its expansion." (McClintock, 2014, p. 157)

Getting beyond the ideological barrier that is created by this context is a further challenge not just for CFOs, but wider change. DeLind observes this barrier in the way in which conventional economic thinking shaped a CSA project :

> "Such thinking framed the CSA as *an alternative market arrangement rather than a partial alternative to the market economy*. It submerged community beneath consumption and later beneath convenience." (DeLind, 1999, p. 5, emphasis in original)

However, whilst critiques of local and alternative food have been constructive they risk jettisoning their critical potential when they generalise in the same manner as the enthusiastic proponents that they critique (Crossan et al., 2016; Galt et al., 2014; McClintock, 2014; Schnell, 2013). This study has focussed on the opportunities these spaces create whilst acknowledging some obstacles. In the next and final chapter I give some concluding remarks and consider the implications arising from the research and how potential obstacles might be overcome.

Chapter 9 – Concluding remarks

9.1 Research Summary

I have drawn on Marx's concept of alienation to understand how the seemingly ordinary practices of participating in CFOs construct well-being in contrast to the alienating experience of everyday life under capitalism. The central research question of this thesis was: *How can the construction of well-being in CFOs be understood to address alienation in the food system?* In answering this question I have presented a wealth of data collected from four CFOs in the East of England. Chapter 4 highlighted the importance of the way in which these spaces are organised for how they realise well-being, profiling each project. Chapter 5 underlined how participation in CFOs facilitated a meaningful relationship with nature, the active engagement with the material context of food production was key to this. Chapter 6 emphasized the social nature of participating in CFOs, the organisation of production is critical in this respect, acting as a medium through which community could be created; bringing people together for a collective purpose and common experience. Chapter 7 described the experience of labour at CFOs as radically different to the experience of labour in capitalist relations of production, as well as the way that the CFOs enabled people to express their agency. The sense of agency, of self-purpose, in the CFOs was a result of the socially constituted nature of work and interaction with concrete material work, that participants could see the purpose of and feel the benefits. Over the course of these chapters I have presented the experience of CFOs as constitutive of well-being and in the last chapter I have made the case that this also constitutes an alternative organisation of

production using a Marxian understanding of well-being. The experience of participation in CFOs seems to provide the opportunity for people to realise capabilities that 'lie fallow elsewhere' (Lefebvre, 2002, p. 212). The understanding of CFOs presented in this thesis makes some important contributions but there are also limitations and implications which need to be considered. This I address in the remaining sections of this chapter.

9.2 Key Contributions

The application of a Marxian well-being approach in the study of community food organisations makes a number of key contributions. Despite their roots in critique of the dominant food system local and alternative crystallizations of the food system have failed to live up to their radical potential. There has been a wide range of theoretical and empirical approaches applied to the study of local and alternative food (Feagan, 2007). However, none have appeared capable of distinguishing their distinctive benefits from the dominant food system. In utilising well-being as an analytical concept this study is unusual, this novelty is in itself a valuable contribution. But, it is in combining this with Marx's concept of alienation that this study addresses the persistent critique of local and alternative food which has argued they "…are neoliberal in their outcomes, or reformist at best, in that they continue to work within the capitalist logic of the food system." (McClintock, 2014, p. 148). In this study I put forward an approach which is sensitive to this critique and therefore able to distinguish the inconsistent realities of these alternative spaces. Applying a Marxian well-being approach makes a significant contribution, both theoretically and empirically to the existing literature on alternative and local food. This contribution will be important if scholars of local and alternative food are going to build a more on the potential within this, by adopting a more nuanced understanding (Crossan et al., 2016).

This study also makes a contribution to the Marxist literature. Scholars and studies that have taken a Marxian approach have tended to pick up the dominant thread in Marx's work, emanating from his central works critiquing the capitalist economic system. This important and central theme has made

significant and valuable contributions (Harvey, 2005, 2006; O'Connor, 1988; Polanyi, 1944 for example), no less so in the context of the food system, (Araghi, 2003; Bernstein, 2006; Douwe van der Ploeg, 2010; McMichael, 2009b). However this analytical perspective has its limitations, it tends to explore the contradictions inherent in the capitalist mode of production exposing how these will lead to a terminal crisis (Brown, 1973; Moore, 2010). As Moore himself admits "The landscape of crisis theory is treacherous ground." (2011, p. 13). It is a "fundamentally predictive exercise" (ibid) there are no guarantees of certainty so we continue await the collapse of capitalism. Moreover these macro approaches tend to overlook the everyday reality of contemporary capitalism. An analysis of value relations can reveal much about the way in which global capitalism structures labour and markets as well as relations of power between states particularly in the food system (Araghi, 2003; Bernstein, 2015; McMichael, 2009a). Ultimately though this approach can be limiting, the notion of well-being that emanates from Marx's conception of alienation can add to this traditional Marxian perspective.

> "But a value relations perspective ultimately limits our understanding of alternatives. We are constrained to 'see like capital'…" (McMichael, 2009b, p. 162)

Therefore the human cost of capital is very often seen in a limited way, the analytical focus is on macro relationships. In the food literature much of the discussion is devoted to peasant agriculture and it's erosion by the forces of capital (Bernstein, 2006; Douwe van der Ploeg, 2010). In contrast actors in the developed world are typically bundled up with the dominant forces of capital that are exerting their influence elsewhere, or categorized as purely consumers. Therefore this study also makes a contribution to this literature in re-visiting Marx's alienation as a critical concept and using it as the basis for a well-being approach. This approach builds on the work of so-called Humanist Marxists (Lefebvre and Fromm, for example) but also more current thinkers such as John Holloway. These kind of approaches locate critique in the everyday understanding that "The situation of capitalism is not just a question of an economic or political crisis, but [is] a catastrophe of human essence" (Marcuse in Brown, 1973, p. 14). This is reflective of Marx's method which "sought to unite theory and practice, to reconcile thought and feeling, to overcome the separation between the personal and the political…"

(Brown, 1973, p. 15). It is important to note that this kind of approach combines structural critique by a conceptual understanding of macro processes with an understanding of how this is manifested in the material reality of everyday life rather than privileging one over the other. Althusser sought to make a distinction between Marx's earlier work and his writing post 1845, arguing that in order to understand the contribution of Marx's critique it was necessary to discard any ethical or humanist objections associated with his early writings (Althusser, 1969, esp. part 7). In contrast this thesis has asserted the need to unite an account of well-being with the critical analysis Marx provides. If it is to retain any critical function a purely 'scientific' approach like Althusser's presupposes some kind of ideal or evaluative framework which capitalism can be compared to (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2007, p. x; see also Byron, 2013), which is precisely what a Marxian perspective of well-being can offer .

Thirdly the study also makes a contribution to the growing literature on well-being. This literature is well-established and interest in the concept and measurement of well-being has a long history. However current approaches which are dominating the policy agenda on well-being (Atkinson, 2013) are inadequate to address the problems which seem to have inspired them. Much of the increased interest around well-being has to be attributed to failure of capitalism to deliver higher levels of well-along greater material wealth (Devine, Pearmain, Prior, & Purdy, 2009; Easterlin & Angelescu, 2009; Helliwell et al., 2013; Pretty, 2013). The re-discovery of well-being by economists as the central goal of societal progress is and should be seen as a positive sign. However this apparent shift has also been accompanied by a period of austerity. In the UK the austerity agenda of the last coalition government and the present conservative government has been concurrent with the adoption of a range of measures of well-being and signs of a desire to shape policy by such measures. The continuing rollback of the welfare state (Galt et al., 2014; Potter & Westall, 2013) and public services alongside apparent interest and activity in the wellbeing agenda brings to mind a rearrangement of the deckchairs on the Titanic. There is a need then for a much more radical Marxian approach to well-being.

This study makes a practical contribution in highlighting the multiple well-being benefits CFOs can offer, there is already an awareness of this particularly in the case of community gardens. One of the gardens included in the study did itself drew much of it's funding from the placements it offered for people referred from health and mental health services. There is now a small and growing literature and interest in the potential of 'social prescribing' as way of addressing poor health and well-being (Brandling & House, 2009; Thomson, Camic, & Chatterjee, 2015). Although there has been very little evidence collected on CSAs with this particular focus, the data collected here shows they could enable people to improve their well-being. The anecdotal evidence in some of the interviewee's narratives specifically identified the way in which participation helped them to cope when they were experiencing depression. This is also consistent with literature identifying care farming and green exercise as important ways of enhancing health and well-being (Barton, Bragg, Wood, & Pretty, 2016; Hassink, Grin, & Hulsink, 2013; Hine, Peacock, & Pretty, 2008). In this sense the findings of the research are perhaps not surprising, but the mechanisms by which well-being is impacted are not so well understood. The social prescribing approach is consistent with a subjective account of well-being which would tend to position CFOs as some kind of treatment that might be applied. To do so though would misunderstand the way in which they address alienation, overlooking the restructuring of production as fundamental to the well-being benefits that arise. If well-being led policy is to really break new ground then this kind of treatment needs to be more than just reactive but preventative, this requires a significant shift in terms of the way the realisation of well-being is understood. Well-being needs to be a foremost consideration if we are to confront the causes of poor well-being, rather than dealing with the affects/effects, it cannot play second fiddle to the creation of monetary wealth.

9.3 Implications of the Research

I have outlined a number of contributions that the research makes, but there are also important implications arising from the research. This study presents the experience of participating in CFOs as a form of productive activity, of labour not structured by the need to realise profit or wage

relationships. I have argued that engagement in this sort of productive activity can be highly beneficial in terms of wellbeing and therefore offers a critical alternative to the productive activity of the dominant food system. If this finding is to be taken seriously then we need to consider how the understanding of well-being articulated here might inform a more substantive reorganisation of the food system around alternative values. The announcement of a soft drink levy, dubbed the 'sugar tax', in this year's budget speech by a Conservative chancellor suggests that there is perhaps an awareness of the severe dysfunctionality of the food system (Treasury, 2016). Well-being might be used as a framework for leveraging change, but more importantly it is a concept capable of encompassing the values and goals of a society that we might actually want to see.

Extending the idea of well-being as central to organising policy and production suggests this kind of analysis also needs to be extended. There are already numerous critiques of the food system and capitalism more broadly, these are important, but I have argued we also need to look at positive articulations of alternatives. Therefore extending this analytical perspective beyond CFOs means not losing site of how such critique might inform an alternative vision. The literature on alternative and local food to date has not been very effective in developing ways to separate out radical potential from appropriation. Some scholars examining urban agriculture and community gardening have emphasized the need not to disregard the critical potential of these spaces despite their contradictions (Crossan et al., 2016; McClintock, 2014). Certainly we need to be careful not to romanticize or over simplify the critique embodied in these spaces. It would be interesting therefore to extend this kind of approach to other crystallizations of the food system, is it capable of distinguishing critical aspects more broadly? This kind of analysis would be useful for comparative purposes. I have highlighted the importance of organisational form in determining benefits for well-being, so how do these CFOs compare with the experience of farmers markets or even supermarket shopping. This begs a further question, how would a Marxian approach to well-being interpret the experience of the dominant food system in terms of consumption and production, this could in fact be quite revealing. For if the impact of externalised costs that are embedded in food production (Pretty et al., 2005) are to be properly

evaluated then well-being seems key. It is a narrow focus on economic considerations that determines them as external costs – not borne by the producer. If critique of the dominant can be anchored to an articulation of what a food system shaped by well-being looks like then this will make the argument much more compelling.

This study has confined itself to an exploration of the experience of community food organisations. However I have sought to bring in a theoretical approach developed from a much wider understanding of the forces that shape our experiences of food. Addressing the negative impact on well-being in the food system by re-configuring it around well-being as opposed to profit would represent a paradigmatic shift of monumental proportions. This is not an aim that will be achieved overnight and nor will it occur without much wider cultural and social change. The consumerist ideal is firmly locked in (Lang, 2009) and despite expressions of counter tendencies like the CFOs, moving away from that will be challenging. These counter tendencies are crucial though because they enable people to embody that change through their practices, it is therefore vital that we make space for this change. As I reflected in the last chapter the time pressure on participants of CFOs acted as a barrier to their participation sometimes. Although they compared their experience of the CFO to paid work favourably, paid work infringed on their time to engage in productive activity that they found rewarding. The New Economics Foundation have also called for a shorter working week in order to give people the time to cultivate their well-being through projects such as the CFOs, although the realisation of well-being may equally take other forms. The reality is that affecting meaningful change in the context of the food system will likely need to take place alongside broader social, cultural and economic change.

CFOs in themselves constitute an important step forward because they create the space for people to realise an alternative form of production, but they also create the psychological space necessary for the ideological shift required. However, if they are to flourish then they also require physical space. The CFOs included in this study arose out of different origins, the two CSAs required significant

investment from individuals who were passionate and motivated, whereas the community gardens were created as a result of publicly owned land which was not being utilised. Opportunities to take hold of such land for these kind of projects are infrequent, and if the state continues to divest of its responsibilities and assets, gaining access to the land will be all the more challenging. The issue of land ownership presents itself as a major barrier to extending CFOs and suggests land reform will be necessary if this is to happen. The importance of access to land was well understood by some CFO participants (see also Armstrong, 2000, p. 322):

> "I think the land thing is a big deal for me, like I'm really aware that the country is very crowded and most of us have just got these tiny terrace gardens, and it like inequality of land ownership it's a big deal for me. I find it and I think the injustice of it is stressful, and um so the fact that there's a piece of land, that ok we don't own it, but it feels like we do, sometimes that's a really big deal. Cos that means you can be a steward of that land and you can have a say in that land. Even if the whole of Ipswich is flooded or becomes even more overpopulated than it is, if all the parks are concreted over or turned into recreation playgrounds. I know that at least there's one bit of twelve acres that no one can touch, the council can't touch it, business, industry can't touch it and that's really important." P2-CSA-OT

9.4 Limitations and further research

Whilst I have argued that this research makes some important contributions it should also be acknowledged that there are limitations. The research methodology was defined in response to the research problem and the explorative nature of the research. As I have highlighted well-being is not commonly used as a conceptual framework in understanding alternative and local food, therefore it was explorative and a Marxian understanding of well-being is a novel approach. It is not possible to argue conclusively that what contributed to well-being in the CFOs studied here is important for well-being universally. However the dominant mode of production in the food system and its alienating tendencies is what the CFOs were positioned against. This mode of production is not limited to the food system, rather it dominates society in general and therefore I would argue that the interpretation of well-being I provide here has wider resonance. The question of the wider relevance of this approach is something which further study and application of this approach might go some way to answering.

The research only looks at four CFOs and within this only two types, all of which are geographically close, located in the East of England. Clearly the way in which the experience of participation shapes well-being will differ across CFOs and this is something which further study could address. Although the commonality in themes across the four sites studied does suggest that the findings of the research may well be applicable in other CFOs. It should also be noted that it was possible to generate more data from the CSAs than the CGs, although I have acknowledged this lack of balance (see chapter 3). Throughout the course of the findings chapters I have drawn attention to some of the differences between the projects particularly between CSA and CG. This is something that became more apparent throughout the course of the research and in terms of the impact of the organisational model and unexplored well-being effects CSAs are perhaps more significant. CGs are understood to produce benefits for well-being although there is little attempt to systematize this into any kind of evaluative framework. Again this is something which future research might address, developing a quantitative approach to measuring well-being from the qualitative findings presented here. This could then be applied to a wider range of forms of CFO or alternative and local food to better understand the distinctive benefits of different forms. Admittedly this would lose some of the rich detail that a qualitative approach offers, employing a mixture of methods may therefore be a better approach. CSAs in particular present a fruitful avenue for future enquiry, there is a broad range of organisational models just within the UK and understanding the impact of this in terms of well-being could prove useful. The focus of this research has been on CFOs in the developed world, the rise of CFOs in this context has been more marked than in the developing world and has likely attracted more attention because the dominance of capital in structuring production is more complete. Consequently applying the theoretical lens used in this research to developing world would be a valuable exercise. Affording the opportunity to study de-alienated production in the context of increasing penetration of capital in the developed world could provide a different kind of insight in comparison to the CFOs studied here which are transgressions of the dominant model of production rather than pockets of resistance.

Final Comments

Interest in local and alternative forms of food shows no sign of going away and this research has sought to demonstrate how valuable particular forms of this can be for people's well-being. This reflects the positive contribution that they can make, but it is also reflective of the negative aspects of life which are detrimental to well-being. The growing interest in these kinds of project as well as the rediscovery of well-being as an overarching political goal suggest that there is a desire and will to move away from a model of production that severely compromises our abilities to realise well-being. If these desires and potential are to be fulfilled then it will require further scholarly work and political action to develop a way of life driven by the goal of achieving well-being. Well-being approaches which fail to understand the organisation of production as the chief cause of poor well-being and the potential for an alternative organisation of production to realise well-being need to be challenged. Crucially though, it will also depend on the everyday actions and practices of ordinary people to actualize and embed this change as a reality.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Topic Guide for CFO participants

Why do people participate in local food initiatives, how do their experiences differ from more conventional food provisioning practices, such as supermarket shopping, and to what extent does participation enhance their sense of well-being?

<u>Introduction</u>

- Give introduction of the area of research and purpose of the interview.

- Confirm consent of interviewee and explain anonymity of interview and offer the opportunity to decline any questions or halt participation at any time.

<u>Personal backgrounds and motivations of people participating in Community Food Initiatives (CFOs)</u>

- When and how did you first become involved in the CFO?
- What are the things that appealed to you about the CFO?
- Was there anything that made you hesitant about getting involved?

<u>Describing the experience of participating in a CFO/ activities</u>

- Can you tell me a bit more about what you do as a member of the CFO/at the CFO? And what is your role in the project?
- So what kind of things do you do when you come to …/ as a member of…? How do you spend your time on a typical day or visit to the project
- So what is it like working/volunteering at the CFO?
    - o Do you have a favourite job/activity? What about the worst job?
    - o What do you most like and least like about the work?
    - o Can you describe what is it that makes it enjoyable?

<u>Environment, work and agency</u>

- Is it important that you can be outside when you're working/volunteering at the CFO?
    - o What do you enjoy about being outdoors?
    - o What about getting your hands dirty?
- How does participating in the CFO make you feel connected to your environment?
- How do you think your attitude towards the environment around you has changed since you began participating in the CFO?
    - o Do you feel more connected to it?
- How does it feel to see an end result, of your work?
- How does it feel when you get a full veg box? How about when your box is not so full?
- How does it feel to be able to cook a meal using food from the CFO?
- How much does the CFO contribute to your food overall?
    - o How do you tend to source the rest of your food?
- How does getting food from the CFO compare with other sources of food such as supermarkets?
- How did you source your food before you were involved with the CSA

- o How do you think being involved in the CFO has changed how you source your food?
- How do you enjoy working with other people at the CFO?
- How does the work you do at the CFO compare with paid work you've done/are doing?
  - o Do you see any distinctions between the two?
- Is learning an important part of being involved in the CFO?
- What about the physical nature of work, how beneficial do you find that?
- Is it important that you're all working toward the same thing? A shared goal and shared work/experiences?

Social Aspects

- Did you know anyone already involved in the project, when you joined?
- How would you describe the people you know at the CFO?
- Have you made new friends through the CFO?
  - o What was it that brought you together, how did you become friends?
- Is it nice to get together with other members/volunteers at parties and other socials?
  - o Do you look forward to social events more than working/volunteering at the project?
- Do you feel like you have a lot in common with other people at the CFO?
  - o Is that important to you?

Involvement and organisation

- How are you involved in how the project is run?
  - o Would you like to be more involved?
  - o How are you involved in decision making?
- Do you feel that you have a real stake in the project?
- How do you think the CFO embodies/reflects your own values or beliefs?
  - o Do you think that these values are reflected in other aspects of your life? – does it meet a need which nothing else does?
- What would you miss most if the CFO wasn't there?
- What are the most important things you get out of being involved in the CFO?
  - o What kind of an impact does it have on your life?
  - o What are the aspects that have really motivated you to remain involved with the project?

Close

- Are there any other things that you wanted to talk about that we haven't covered already?
- Did you have any questions that you wanted to ask me?
- Can I just confirm that you're happy for me to contact you in the future if I need to clarify any of the content of the interview or ask you a follow up question?
- Thank you very much for agreeing to take part and giving me your time.

Appendix 2

<u>Topic Guide for CFO project leaders</u>

Why do people participate in local food initiatives, how do their experiences differ from more conventional food provisioning practices, such as supermarket shopping, and to what extent does participation enhance their sense of well-being?

<u>Introduction</u>

- Give introduction of the area of research and purpose of the interview.

- Confirm consent of interviewee and explain anonymity of interview and offer the opportunity to decline any questions or halt participation at any time.

<u>Backgrounds and reasons for initiating Community Food Initiatives (CFOs)</u>

- Can you tell me how the CFO came about?
- What were the aims of the project when it was set up?
- What did you see as the main challenges in setting up the CFO?

<u>How the is CFO organized</u>

- Can you just describe how the project works?
    - How would you describe the organisational form of the project, for example is it a charity or…?
    - How do people get involved with the project?
    - What are the different roles in the project?
- So what kind of things do people do when they come to work/volunteer at the project?

<u>Participation and what it means</u>

- What does the project offer people who get involved?
    - What do you think are the main reasons that people participate?
- How does the CFO try to achieve it's aims?
- Are there any particular activities or elements of the project that people seem to particularly enjoy?
- Is being outside and connection to the environment an important aspect of the CFO?
    - How does being involved in the CFO change how people perceive the environment and how connected they feel?
- How important is it that people are able to see the result of their work and can enjoy the products of their labour, by taking home some food?
- What sort of proportion of people's food does the CFO aim to contribute?
- How do you think the CFO can change people's attitudes toward food?
- How is work at the CFO shared out?
- How does the expectation of work put in by volunteers/members of the CFO differ from paid staff?
    - What are the distinctions between the two?
- Is learning/education an important part of the CFO?

- o Why is that?
- What about the physical activity?
- Does the CFO aim to bring people together
    - o Is this an important aspect of what the project is trying to achieve?

Social Aspects

- How do people normally find out about the CFO and decide to get involved?
- Are social events a big part of the CFO as well?
- How does the CFO aim to build community?
- What are the social aspects of the CFO that you think appeal to people?
- What are the values of the CFO that people involved tend to identify with?
- How diverse are the people involved with the CFO?

Involvement and organisation

- How involved can volunteers/members get in how the project is run?
    - o Do they tend to want to be involved?
- What is the decision making process at the CFO?
    - o At what points do members/volunteers get involved?
- How do you think the way the CFO is organized means that those involved have a real stake in the project?
- What are the values and beliefs that the CFO embodies/reflects?
    - o How are these values/beliefs expressed in the activities at the CFO?
    - o Do you think that these values are reflected in other aspects of peoples' lives?
- Does the CFO aim to meet needs which are not being met in other ways?
- What are the most important things people get out of being involved in the CFO?
    - o What kind of an impact does it have on their life?

Well-being of project leaders

- What made you want to initiate/ or become involved in this project?
    - o Are you still motivated by the same things?
- What are the most important things that you get out of leading/running the project?
    - o What would you miss if it ended?
- What has been challenging for you in setting up the project and keeping it going?
- What are the factors that have helped you to continue running the project?

Close

- Are there any other things that you wanted to talk about that we haven't covered already?
- Did you have any questions that you wanted to ask me?
- Can I just confirm that you're happy for me to contact you in the future if I need to clarify any of the content of the interview or ask you a follow up question?
- Thank you very much for agreeing to take part and giving me your time.

Appendix 3

Demographic Questions

Please tick the appropriate box for the following questions

What is your gender?

☐ Male
☐ Female

What is your age?

☐ Under 18 years old
☐ 18 – 29 years old
☐ 30 – 49 years old
☐ 50 – 64 years old
☐ 65 years and over

What is your marital status?

☐ Single, never married
☐ Married or domestic partnership
☐ Widowed
☐ Divorced
☐ Separated

How would you describe your ethnicity?

☐ White British
☐ White European
☐ Asian or Asian British
☐ Black or Black British
☐ Middle Eastern
☐ Mixed race
☐ Any other Ethnic group

What is the highest level of education you have achieved?

☐ GCSE or equivalent e.g. O level (grade C and above)
☐ A level or equivalent
☐ Technical/trade or vocational qualification
☐ University Degree
☐ Postgraduate qualification
☐ No formal qualifications

What is your yearly income?

	Under £10,000
	£10 – 15,000
	£15 – 22,000
	£22, - 30,000
	£30- 40,000
	£50,000
	£60,000 +

What is your current employment status?

	Employed
	Self-employed
	Unemployed
	Retired
	In education
	Unable to work
	Homemaker

If employed, what are you employed as?

_____

Appendix 4

Demographic Questions

Please tick the appropriate box for the following questions

What is your gender?

☐ Male
☐ Female

What is your age?

☐ Under 18 years old
☐ 18 – 29 years old
☐ 30 – 49 years old
☐ 50 – 64 years old
☐ 65 years and over

What is your marital status?

☐ Single, never married
☐ Married or domestic partnership
☐ Widowed
☐ Divorced
☐ Separated

How would you describe your ethnicity?

☐ White British
☐ White European
☐ Asian or Asian British
☐ Black or Black British
☐ Middle Eastern
☐ Mixed race
☐ Any other Ethnic group

What is the highest level of education you have achieved?

☐ GCSE or equivalent e.g. O level (grade C and above)
☐ A level or equivalent
☐ Technical/trade or vocational qualification
☐ University Degree
☐ Postgraduate qualification
☐ No formal qualifications

What is your yearly income?

☐ Under £10,000
☐ £10,001 – 15,000
☐ £15,001 – 22,000
☐ £22,001 - 30,000
☐ £30,001- 40,000
☐ £40,001 – 60,000
☐ £60,000 +

What is your current employment status?

☐ Employed
☐ Self-employed
☐ Unemployed
☐ Retired
☐ In education
☐ Unable to work
☐ Homemaker

If employed, what are you employed as?_____

How long have you been involved with the CSA/Community garden?_____

How far away do you live from the CSA/Community garden?

☐ Less than a mile
☐ 1-3 miles
☐ 4-10 miles
☐ 10-20 miles
☐ More than 20 miles

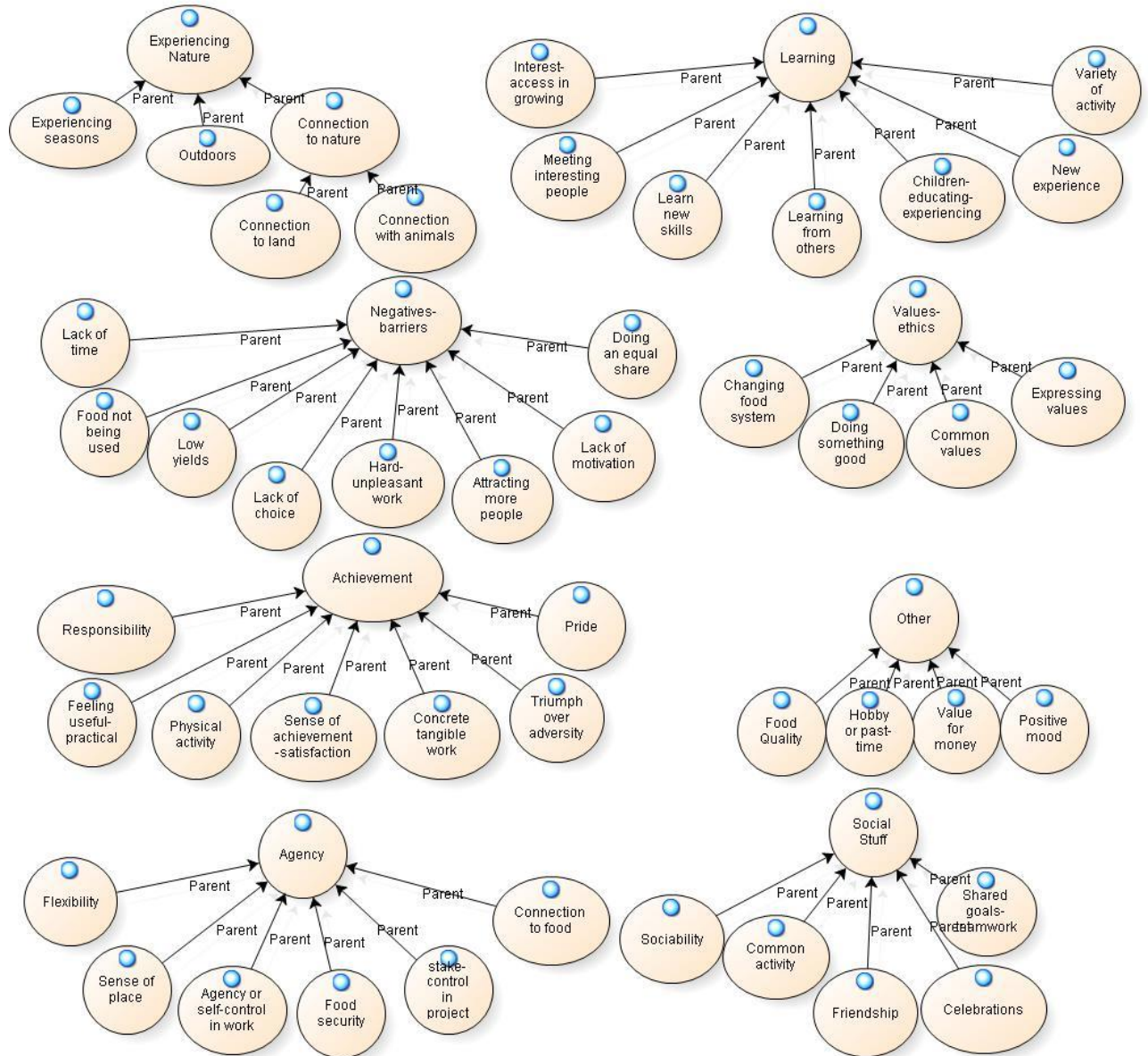Why did you decide to get involved with the CSA/Community garden?
_____

What are the things you enjoy about being part of the CSA/Community garden?
_____

How has being involved in the CSA/Community garden had an impact on your life?
_____

What would you miss most of you were no longer involved in the CSA/Community Garden?
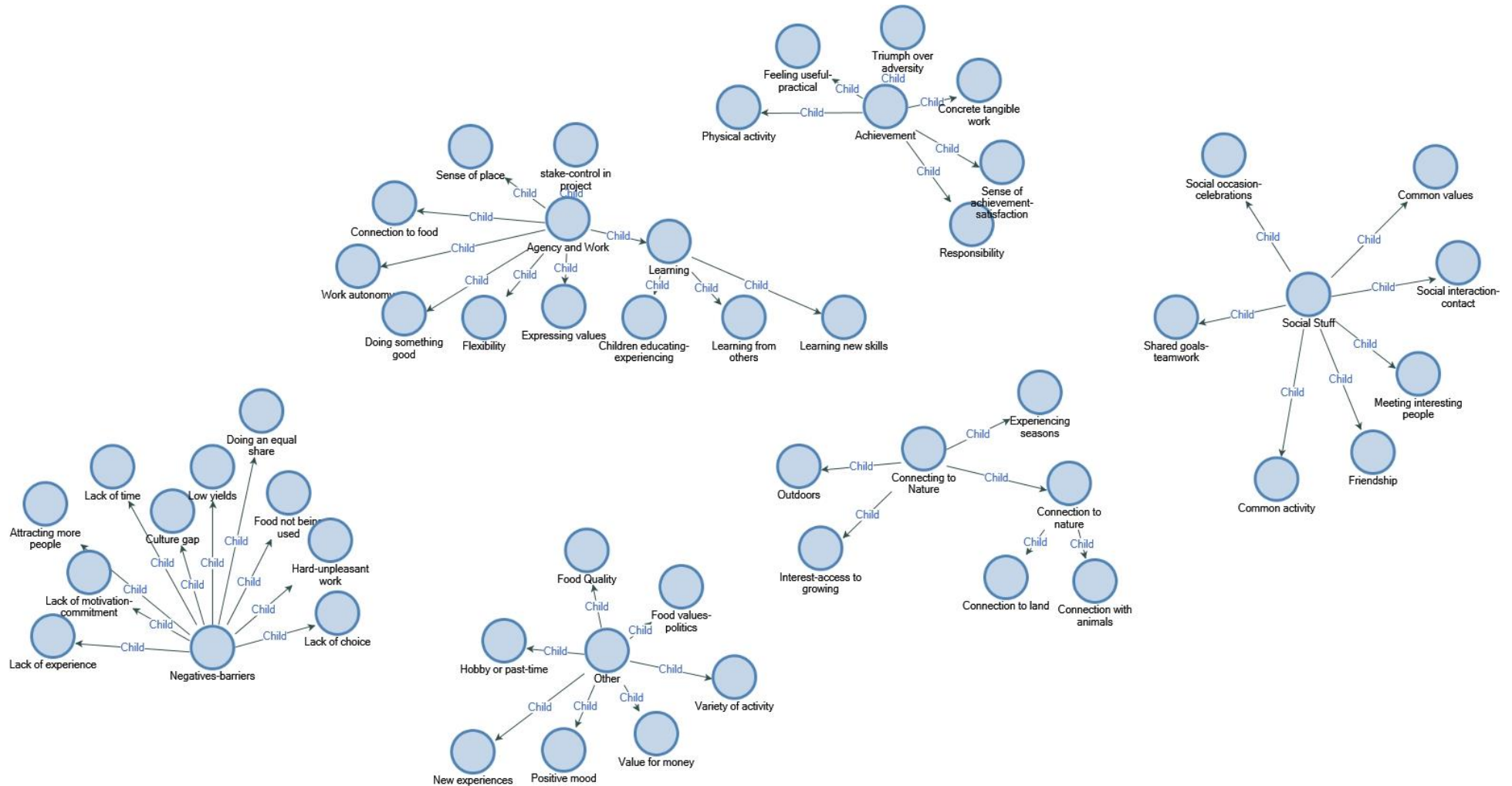_____

Appendix 5

First thematic Framework

Appendix 6

Final Thematic Framework

Appendix 7

<u>Information sheet and consent form</u>

You have been invited to take part in this research project. This sheet provides information about the research, it is important that you understand what the research is about and what taking part involves. You should only participate if you want to; participation in the research is on a purely voluntary basis and you are free to withdraw at any time without prejudice and without providing a reason. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask me if there is anything that is not clear, or if you would like more information.

Aim of the Research

The purpose of the research is to explore the experience of participating in local food projects and initiatives. In order to understand how sourcing food in this way differs from more typical food provisioning practices such as supermarket shopping and how this relates to individuals' sense of well-being.

What participation involves

Participants are asked to take part in an interview with the researcher (David Watson) which will last approximately an hour. You will be asked a range of questions about your attitudes and experiences in relation to local food. The interview will not cover any sensitive or personal topics and you are free not to answer any questions or withdraw at any time. I ask for your permission to contact you again if needed so that I can ask follow up questions or clarify information.

How data will be used and stored

The information collected in the interview will be used to address the research aim described above. All data collected will be anonymised and stored securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act. The data will be kept for no longer than five years (following the completion of the research), it may be used for further research and will remain anonymised.

This research project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Essex, to make sure that research participants are protected from harm. If you have any questions, or if you wish to find out more about the research, please contact me:

By email: djwats@essex.ac.uk **By post**: David Watson, Essex Business School, Colchester Campus, University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester, Essex, CO4 3SQ, United Kingdom

Participant Identification Number:

CONSENT FORM

Name of Researcher: David Watson

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the attached information sheet dated 25/6/2013. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

3. I understand that any information given by me may be used in future reports, articles or presentations by the research team and that my name will not appear in any reports, articles or presentations.

4. I agree to be contacted again in the future regarding this research project

5. I agree to take part in the study.

_____   _____   _____

Name of Participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____

Researcher   Date   Signature

One copy of this consent form is for the participant to keep and another will be kept securely on file at: Room 5NW.4.4 University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester, C04 3SQ

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