UCL

Growing a Commons Food Regime: Theory and Practice

Thesis Submitted to University College London
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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2013

Declaration of authorship

I, Marina Chang, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Abstract

Existing food regimes theory has a strong analytical power to help us understand the reality of contemporary global food politics and has a political commitment to provoke a new direction in our thinking. Yet, it falls short on how we can actually engage with such a change, especially with the pressing need for strategic alliances among multiple food movements which aim to advance a regime change. By exploring both theory and practice, this research addresses this gap and responds to a call for a new food regime in the 21st century.

Firstly, this research proposes the notion of growing a commons food regime. With care as the core, an integrative framework for growing a commons food regime is presented, drawing on reviews of literature on food regimes theory, commons regimes, adaptive governance and critical food studies. This framework aims at building an adaptive capacity to transform the current food system towards sustainability. Secondly, applying the framework as 'a tool of insight', the current landscape of community food initiatives was investigated in order to identify implications and opportunities to grow a commons food regime in London. Finally, considering the significant role of universities in helping to form multiple and reciprocal connections with society; and as a catalyst and an experiment in integrating theory and practice in growing a commons food regime, a journey of university-led community food initiatives was carried out at University College London (UCL) as a case study. On reflection, the thesis suggests ways forward in continuing to grow care-based commons food regimes through community food initiatives at UCL. With our growing adaptive capacity, we might enter a new epoch of history.

Acknowledgments

I had a great deal of help in producing this thesis, and help came at every step of the way. I would like to express my gratitude to all of those involved, and whose willingness to share their experiences and stories helped develop this piece of work. However, as hundreds of people were involved in some way in this project, any attempt to that everyone is bound to be incomplete. My apologies go to those who have been omitted due to limited space or a failure of memory.

Special thanks go to my three supervisors Dr. Robert Biel, Professor Caren Levy and Professor Yves Cabannes for their guidance and encouragement, and more importantly, their unreserved trust that I would be able to overcome the anticipated and unanticipated challenges and finally produce this thesis. I would also like to sincerely thank a group of colleagues and friends from whom I received important support. These include:

> Lesley Acton, Adriana Allen, Pushpa Arabindoo, Camillo Boano, Piyapong Bossabong, John Braime, Ben Campkin, Fong-Yee Chan, Chia-Lin Chen, Clayton Chiang, Steve Cross, Julio Dávila, Shin-Shin E, Michael Edwards, Chloë Fèvre, Daniel Fitzpatrick, Victoria Foster, Matthew Gandy, Louise Gates, Khadija Gitay, Muki Haklay, Hao Zhen Han, Andrew Harris, Mary Hilson, Hilary Jackson, Dan-Azumi Jake, Sandra Jasper, Moses Mpuria Kindiki, Regan Koch, Chris Lemmens, Ming Leung, Lukas Meusburger, Hector Becerril Miranda, Gemma Moore, Kevin Morgan, Lucy Natarajan, Ian Needleman, Kaori O'Connor, Lila Oriard, Phil Paulo, Michel Pimbert, Jane Rendell, David Roberts, Ian Scott, Michael Stuart, Colin Tudge, Jim Tyson, Rita Valencia, Celina Veríssimo, Harry West, Sion Whellens, Michael Worton, Dafeng Xu and Karol Yanez.

My heartfelt thanks go to Ian Fitzpatrick and Geoffrey Shepherd who read the manuscripts with great care and intelligence, and every page they touched they made better.

Thanks also go to the financial support from UCL Research Challenges, UCL Public Engagement Unit, UCL Grand Challenges, UCL Graduate School, and Funds for Women Graduates (FfWG).

I am likewise aware of my indebtedness to my family, for their generous support, not only during the last four years, but all those preceding. I am happily in their debt and send them a warm embrace.

Finally, I dedicate this thesis to all those who care about growing a commons food regime. I thank all of you for keeping the water flowing, the food growing, the kitchen cooking, and our journey together continuing, and ultimately leading the world to enter a new epoch of history.

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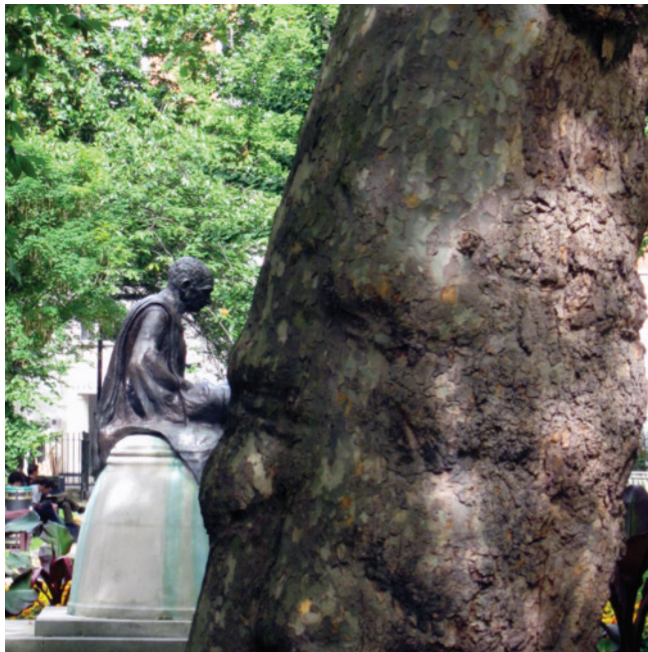
Chapter 1: Introduction



"Be the change you want to see in the world".
Mahatma Gandhi

1.1 Responding to a call for a new food regime in the 21st century

> *A new regime seems to be emerging not from attempts to restore elements of the past, but from a range of cross-cutting alliances and issues linking food and agriculture to new issues. These include quality, safety, biological and cultural diversity, intellectual property, animal welfare, environmental pollution, energy use, and gender and racial inequalities… The tension at the heart of the emerging…food regime is thus coming into view: states, firms, social movements, and citizens are entering a new political era characterized by a struggle over the relative weight of private, public, and self-organised institutions (Friedmann, 2005:249, 259).*

In recent years the global food crisis has attracted massive attention, from policy makers, the media, researchers and civil society alike, and resulted in attempts to search for ways which could reduce the pressures facing our food system. Over the last decade, evidence has shown 'new fundamentals' further threatening twenty-first century food systems (Lang, 2009). These include the pressures imposed by climate change, non-renewable sources of energy, population growth, water scarcity, dietary change and public health, land and soil, biodiversity and ecosystems support and financial speculation. These new fundamentals lead to growing concerns including the availability of resources and the inequities in resource use and consumption between different countries. Millions of vulnerable people around the world are suffering from starvation due to food shortages and increased food prices. According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), for the first time in human history, the number of people suffering from hunger reached over a billion in 2009 (FAO, 2009).

Along with hunger come malnutrition and/or undernourishment, social exploitation and the mass displacement of people which, in turn, triggers food riots and social and political unrest. These have not been limited to the poorest countries like Haiti, but have also taken place in other countries such as Egypt, Indonesia, Ukraine, Bolivia and Malaysia (Jarosz, 2009) and even in resource-rich countries like Brazil (Holt-Giménez, 2008:1). Ironically, the World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that over a billion adults are overweight or obese (WHO, 2005). Like many other scholars addressing the world food crisis (Lang, 2009; Holt-Giménez and Shattuck, 2011; Young, 2004), Jarosz (2009:2067) argues that this crisis is by no means a 'perfect storm' but an entirely predictable outcome, based upon an interlinked process, embedded within a capitalist system and neoliberal political economy.

Against this background of global food crisis, a plethora of discourses from food movements has arisen which analyses our food system and challenges the way that food is produced, distributed and sold; and from the consumers' point of view, how food is perceived, viewed and consumed. These discourses range from food security vs. food sovereignty (Holt-Giménez, 2008; Petal, 2009), ecological public health (Lang et al., 2009) and eco-imperialism (Shiva, 2009), to alternative food networks, sustainable food systems, vegetarianism and slow food. While the discourses listed are by no means comprehensive, common to all of them is the emphasis placed on civil society as the key agent of change (Blay-Palmer, 2010; Hinrichs and Lyson, 2008; Mogan et al., 2006; Sumner, 2005). Although each food movement has its own underpinning values and priorities, they can be loosely defined as an 'ethical foodscape' with two key features,

namely, ecological integrity and social justice (Morgan, 2010). Likewise, McMichael (2008) also observes that a 'unity' of these social movements rests on their reframing 'ontological concerns' and 'epistemological gears' through a critique of neoliberalism, arguing that the food crisis results from a lack of resilience, justice, democracy and autonomy (Desmarais, 2007; Alkon and Norgaard, 2009). Indeed, no matter how many different pathways and/or ideologies each movement advocates, there is a broad-based desire for a structural change as systems shift from one regime to another (Friedmann and McMichael, 1989; Friedmann, 1993, 2005, 2009; McMichael, 2005, 2009a,b) towards sustainable food systems and ultimately the sustainability of socio-ecological systems. There is even call for 'strategic alliances' among food movements in order to advance regime change (Holt-Giménez and Shattuck, 2011:132). However, there is little clear explanation of how this could be achieved.

As I search for answers, the recent surge of the commons discourse provides some promising insights. Responding to Hardin's (1968) 'Tragedy of the Commons', many scholars have demonstrated that people can come together collectively and cooperatively to govern diverse shared resources with institutional arrangements (Ostrom, 1990, 1992; Ostrom et al., 2002; Dietz et al., 2003). While traditional commons focuses on natural resources governance regimes (e.g. groundwater, forest, agricultural land, etc.), the new commons (e.g. knowledge commons, culture commons, global commons, etc.) (Hess, 2008) and even more radical approaches from an anti-capitalist perspective (e.g. De Angelis, 2007; Biel, 2011) open up an uncharted territory with much wider scope and possibilities. The essence of a commons is a non-commodified, cooperative social relationship where people are involved in governing shared resources voluntarily (De Angelis, 2007). This is a fundamentally alternative organising principle to the capitalist economy. Therefore, in this thesis, I propose the concept of 'a commons food regime' as a response to Friedmann (2005, 2009) and McMichael's (2008, 2009b) call for a new food regime in the 21st century. I develop this concept based on the theory of a commons resource governance regime and apply it to a variety of food-related resource governance.

A commons food regime is different from the existing food regimes theory in at least four major ways. First, it emphasises the notion of the commons as the principal mode of governance. Second, because it adopts a new conception of a regime, a commons food regime moves away from the passive historical concept of food and agriculture development within the long cycle of capital accumulation to a more active one, i.e. governing food-related shared resources. Third, as a commons is defined by a given community, which can be small or large, what counts as a shared food-related resource then becomes a political and learning process demanding contestation and deliberation, and to some extent can be seen as an experiment. This has an important implication that a commons food regime can be 'grown' (practised) with different scales and forms, depending on the size of the community and the kind of shared food-related resources a regime is governing. Finally, and most importantly, my approach to the commons is value-laden rather than value-neutral, especially given the use of the concept of care, which lies at the core of the commons food regime.

The argument employed is that we do not have to wait for the wholesale structural change of large-scale or nation state regime change. Each individual commons food regime represents a regime change. Arguably, this may empower people to see immediate impacts emerging from their collective actions. Furthermore, each individual commons food regime occupies a space in the current neoliberal political economy. Unlike

traditional commons usually constrained within a geographical locality, these new commons food regimes can be grown on different scales, for example, transnationally and/or across boundaries, such as cybernetic commons or information commons as long as there is something related to food resources of one kind or another. The diversity of commons food regimes follows the principle of biodiversity in the natural world, trying to develop symbiotic and synergistic relationships among them. On the basis of this logic, if we start to grow a commons food regime wherever possible, we would be contributing to reshaping the entire landscape of the international food regime. Indeed, a commons food regime represents a new vision of sustainable food systems and ultimately the global sustainability of social-ecological systems as a whole for the 21st century.

Responding to a call for a new food regime in the 21st century, at the heart of a commons food regime, constructed in this thesis, there is the need to rethink, reformulate and exercise alternative practices in 'governance' with a nuanced interpretation of care as the core. At this point, you might start to wonder who I am and why I am doing this research. What follows is a story of a mission and research. It is a story of travelling far away from my home country, Taiwan, to one of the main roots of the global capitalist system, London, to discover sites of solidarity and views and aspects of the revolutionary process for changing the world. I am journeying between cities, communities, peoples, disciplines, and identities, between knowing and not knowing, between being both an insider and outsider and between past, present and future. It is as much about discovering truth as creating it.

1.2 Shaping an academic-activist identity for community food movements

> *Few other systems touch people's daily lives in such an intimate way and thereby provide such a strong motivation and opportunity for citizenship…Food, like no other commodity, allows for a political awakening…draws on and helps nurture authentic relationship…[and] suggests both belonging and participating, at all levels of relationship (Welsh and MacRae, 1998:240-41).*

In this section, I aim to outline a number of events, narratives, stories and turning points that had influences in shaping my academic-activist identity for community food movements.

When I was working as a corporate manager in Taiwan, I devoted my spare time to community activism supporting migrant workers as well as victims of nuclear waste. At work, I was involved in new joint ventures among big international enterprises, thanks to the global liberalisation of trade; and at the same time outside the office, I participated in protests against the World Trade Organisation's free market policy concerning food and agriculture. My life slipped into two different identities without moral integrity. I cannot really recall when I started to question this 'blurred' reality. What I do remember was that an increasingly strong attraction emerged for the immediate and constant transformation of everyday life and demanding of the impossible, much as the Situationists (e.g. Debord, 1998; Andreotti and Costa, 1996) urged us to chart our own future instead of waiting for the future. I quit my secure and well-reputed career and arrived in the city where Marx (together with Engels) wrote his 'Communist Manifesto'. I became a mature student after so many years away from university. From day one, I focused my efforts to put the scattered pieces of myself back into one place and followed Gandhi's motto, "be the change you want to see in the world".

For decades, I have practised vegetarianism as a dietary discipline on an everyday level, and as a philosophy concerned with creating harmony between body, spirit, humanity, society and ecology. With this philosophy in mind, and again drawing inspiration from Beuys's idea of 'social sculpture', in the spring of 2009, I produced a large tablecloth to communicate the significance of food and its relationship with the world we live in. In this view of food and its meaning, the kitchen is the pivotal point. It is the place where we share meals, exchange ideas and engage with the world. This work tried to integrate different spatial theories and art forms into 'a living sculpture', set in a community garden. During the performance, participants moved around the 'sculpture' and were invited to figure out the visible patterns and invisible connections that were displayed or interpreted on the table cloth. That was my first attempt to bring people together from different backgrounds and cultures to create a new kind of community. Since this event, the huge tablecloths I made have been to many community gardens, public parks and food events, receiving an unexpected welcome wherever they were present.

At the time of writing my Master's dissertation, London was (and still is) one of those cities which was achieving a remarkable momentum in its handling of urban agriculture with its new and diverse initiatives, and with its wide range of stakeholders involved. Despite the growth of research into the various dimensions of urban agriculture, in-

depth understanding of the people involved in putting the theories and visions into practice still receives little attention. As part of my Master's work I examined The Abundance project. This was set up in Brixton, South London, as a partnership between UCL academia, a social movement (Transition Town Brixton) and a social housing estate, and as a demonstration site where the issue of food security might be addressed. From an in-depth investigation into the multiple stakeholders involved in the Abundance Project, a hugely complex picture emerged. On the one hand, my Master's dissertation (Chang, 2009) argued that the success or failure of the project should not be assessed only in the short term and only by focusing on its impact in this particular estate, but rather on the wider Brixton context. On the other hand, it raised important questions not only about the practices of food activism and how food security was understood and prioritised by various participants, but also highlighted the need for a more critical and reflective understanding of urban agriculture initiatives in specific social, cultural and geographical contexts.

Although the two projects mentioned above are on a very small scale, they have had a profound influence on my PhD research process and methodologies. At the very beginning of my time as a PhD student, I conducted an exploratory study using a multi-sited ethnography methodology, looking at six community urban agriculture initiatives in London to further understand their current challenges and opportunities.

Four general observations resulted from this preliminary study. The first relates to the nature of changes in the food systems. Each project was concerned with their different dimensions of change, some directly related to food, but others focusing on issues such as community development, social inclusion and public health. Even for those whose initial aim was to change the food system, the outcome was much more about capacity building. The second observation relates to the tendency that local food growing projects encountered a high risk of being co-opted by populist discourse from the mainstream. As Biel's (2011:318) reminds us, "Food is both the area of greatest incompatibility in principle between capitalism and the natural system, and also paradoxically one of the most notable areas where the ruling order now adapts its discourses in an attempt to co-opt community empowerment." The third observation relates to a genuine enthusiasm for food and farming issues at a community level, and quasi-commons characteristics (e.g. sharing, gift economy, community land trust, etc.) and problems (e.g. free-riding, conflicts, sustainability, etc.) were witnessed at times. The final observation is that, underlying this enthusiasm, a complexity of networks in terms of projects, knowledge, talents, resources and ideas were rapidly emerging. In addition, some of these initiatives exhibited a strategy based on place but not necessarily place-bound, due to their relational characteristics (Baker, 2009). I realise that rather than focusing on urban food growing only, a complex systems approach is needed to better understand inherently diverse and multi-faced dimensions of this system. This also led me to pay more attention to exploring the potential to be found in the rebuilding of order from below, and the redistribution of power within the system.

My particular interest in the role of the community developed from three closely related influences. Firstly, there is growing evidence that global food movements such as Slow Food and Via Campesina can successfully resist a certain level of corporate neo-liberal regime (Friedmann and McNair, 2008). Local grassroots organisations such as Transition Networks in the UK can also contribute to the transition towards a low-carbon food economy (Soil Association, 2009). Secondly, the ever-growing discourses on community in UK politics caught my attention. From the Labour Party's notion

of 'sustainable communities' to the Coalition Government's new banner of the 'Big Society' and the Localism Bill, community organisation has moved to the centre-stage and devolution of power to the local level can arguably represent a rhetoric of window dressing as well as a window of opportunity for a more empowered form of democracy. Thirdly, it related to my direct engagement in community activism in Taiwan. Taiwan is recognised as a site for grassroots R&D and I had a deep and long-standing involvement in civic society in Taiwan. For the last twenty years, I developed a strong personal interest in the fate of these communities. In addition, my previous experience working with marginalized communities deepened my understanding of how dynamic power relations perform at various scales and in different forms.

All of these experiences combined to help me shape my PhD research topic. I ally myself to what Kloppenberg and his colleagues assert: "to bring in our lives and its capacity to connect us materially and spiritually to each other and to the earth, we believe that it is a good place to start" (1996:40). I gradually began to grasp that food is a valuable theoretical and pedagogical device. I challenged myself asking whether I could find a concept in addressing the issue of power relations at different scales in our food system – from a community level to global structures. We have already known that how food is produced, distributed, consumed and even how waste is managed can be a revealing window onto wider concerns in our society. Food also has been taken as an entry point to examine a myriad of debates such as public health, equality, democracy and justice, ecological sustainability and human well-being. These issues require us to concern ourselves with discourses on political economy as well as acquire a better understanding of cultural-symbolic underpinnings of people's food practices on a daily basis (Lind and Barham, 2004:48). The idea of growing a commons food regime is like a seed to be germinated as a response to a call for a new food regime in the 21st century.

To a large extent, my academic-activist identity has had a profound impact on how my research topic has evolved. A number of sources of influence have helped shape my academic-activist identity. The first and foremost is feminist-vegetarianism. As Bailey (2007:39) argues, "ethical vegetarianism can been taken as a strategy of resistance to classist, racist, heterosexist and colonialists systems of power that often rely on the assumption of speciesism to ground these axes of oppression". Feminist scholars have valued women's everyday experience and feelings as a legitimate source of knowledge (Maguire, 2008). As Barnsley and Ellis suggest, "the kind of research we're recommending provides an analysis of issues based on a description of how people actually experience those issues" (1992:10-13). Moreover, their emphasis on embracing diversity and connecting ways of knowing with ways of researching has profound implications on what knowledge is of most worth and the meaning of research as a whole.

The second source of influence comes from Gibson-Graham's (2008) notion of 'performative epistemology', suggesting that research practice and findings have important effects. Therefore, they remind us of the responsibility of academics to "recognise their constitutive role in the worlds that exist, and their power to bring new worlds into being. It should not be single-handedly, of course, but alongside other world-makers, both inside and outside the academy" (Gibson-Graham, 2008:614). They advocate experimenting in partnership, "Working with people who are already making new worlds…to mobilize the resources to support the co-creation of knowledges, create the networks necessary to spread these knowledges, work with activists and academics of the future, and foster an environment where new facts can survive" (ibid:629).

My third source of influences relates to Marxist intellectuals. This enterprise gestures towards Gramsci's insistence that "The consciousness of being part of a given hegemonic force (that is, political consciousness) is the first phase in a further and progressive self-consciousness in which theory and practice are finally unified. The unity of theory and practice, then, is also not a given mechanical datum, but a historical becoming… and develops up to the real and complete possession of a coherent and unitary conception of the world" (1971:333-4). This self-consciousness resonates well with Freire's (1972) seminal work on theory of conscientisation. He states that, "A humanising education is the path through which men and women can become conscious about their presence in the world. The way they act and think when they develop all of their capacities, taking into consideration their needs, but also the needs and aspirations of others" (Freire and FreiBetto, 1985, cited in Lankshear and McLaren, 1994:xiv). Moreover, I realise that while only a few academics can engineer resistance to neoliberal globalising from the top down, we can at least contribute our research energy and resources, becoming more actively engaged in the process of envisaging alternatives (Johnston and Goodman, 2006). The three elements in Freire's true education fascinate me: true education encourages the oppressed to believe in themselves; this self-discovery experience "cannot be purely intellectual but must involve action; nor can it be limited to mere activism, but must include serious reflection" (Freire, 1972:47). This is a promise of social change that echoes Harvey's 'revolutionary theory'. Harvey noted that "a social movement becomes an academic movement and an academic movement becomes a social movement when all elements in the population recognise the need to reconcile analysis and action" (1973:149). He asserts that 'revolutionary theory', is

> *Grounded in the reality it seeks to represent, the individual propositions of which are ascribed a contingent truth status. A revolutionary theory is dialectically formulated and can encompass conflict and contradiction within itself. [It] offers real choices for future moments in the social process by identifying immanent choices in an existing situation. The implementation of these choices serves to validate the theory and to provide the grounds for the formulation of new theory. A revolutionary theory consequently holds out the prospect for creating truth rather than finding it (1973:150-151).*

The final strand of influence, perhaps the most significant one, is my father. A long time before I learned about the term 'academic-activist', I had a role model at home. As a professor at university, my father has been a life-long educational reformist, an environmental activist and a social justice advocate. He takes students to a factory to show how its polluted waste-water is harming good quality agricultural land. He worries about the declining rural economy as well as those urban homeless suffering from the sudden drop of temperature in deep winter. He listens, contemplates, but never sits down doing nothing. He is moving mountains by carrying a piece of rock or a branch of a tree on his shoulder. He is happy and grateful if someone joins his endless challenges but he is still calm and firm when he is alone, even though at the bottom of his heart he does believe in human cooperation as the key to individual dignity. The future of Taiwan as well as the whole world was a regular topic at our meals. He encourages me and my brother to be reflective and critical of any doctrine and always asks ourselves, "How can we do something about the problems we are facing?"

1.3 Research questions and structure of thesis

As an academic-activist, I consider myself to have two major roles: understanding the world and participating in changing it; research questions that give credence to the dialectic between theory and practice are important in building adaptive capacity for community food movements to bring about systemic changes.

The central research question is:

How can we 'grow a commons food regime' as a response to a call for a new food regime in the 21st century, both in theory and in practice, as an academic-activist?

As the title of the thesis shows, ***Growing a Commons Food Regime: Theory and Practice***, the word 'growing' is meant to capture the combination of strategic planning as well as the emergent nature of a commons food regime, which requires ongoing care and cultivation to ensure its living. The central research question generates three subsidiary research questions, covering both theory and practice and constituting the following three chapters of the thesis.

Chapter 2 deals with the first subsidiary question: ***how can we build theoretical foundations for growing a commons food regime?*** This is the theoretical part of the thesis.

Chapter 3 deals with the second subsidiary question: ***how can we grow a commons food regime by learning from community food initiatives in London?*** This is the first part of an attempt to understand the general context of growing a commons food regime in London.

Chapter 4 deals with the third subsidiary question: ***how can we grow a commons food regime in practice through a university-led community food initiative at UCL (University College London)?*** This is the second part of an attempt to understand the commons food regime in London by documenting and examining our own practices.

Finally, *Chapter 5* is an overarching chapter that pulls together what has been constructed and discussed in the previous chapters, including ***a photo essay, conclusions, reflections and ways forward*** regarding growing a commons food regime.

Chapter 2:
Building Theoretical Foundations for Growing a Commons Food Regime

Learning from an indigenous way of living: simple, cooperative, and caring between man and nature (an informal settlement of Amis people, Taiwan)

2.1 Introduction

Responding to Friedmann (2005, 2009) and McMichael's (2005, 2009b) call for a new food regime in the 21st century, this chapter explores the theoretical underpinnings of my research and introduces the notion of growing a commons food regime.

Section 2.2 of this chapter is divided into three parts: it begins with a review of the evolution of food regimes theory in the last twenty years; it then discusses whether there is an emergent new food regime among food regimes scholars; and in conclusion, being an academic-activist, I reflect on issues that arise from food regimes theory that are moving towards sustainable transitions.

Section 2.3 explores the rise of commons regimes (both natural commons and new commons), then engages with challenges from anti-capitalist perspectives on the development of uncritical revivals of commons regimes, and ends with my own reflections on how to optimise the scope of commons regimes in a complex world today.

Section 2.4 aims to respond to my previous reflections by constructing an integrative framework for growing a commons food regime. This section firstly facilitates a shift from a passive conceptualisation of global agri-food developments in capitalist systems, to being actively engaged with the politics of food by outlining common themes between agri-food studies and commons regimes. It then elaborates a holistic conception of care as the core of a commons food regime. Finally, the rest of the section expands on constructing an integrative framework for growing a commons food regime with the aim of building adaptive capacity to govern any food-related shared resources and transforming currently unsustainable food systems towards more sustainable ones and ultimately towards the sustainability of social-ecological systems as a whole.

In turn, the integrative framework constructed serves as a broad conceptual map ('a tool of insight') both for exploring the general context, and for strategic planning related to growing a commons food regime, its internal commoning dynamics (i.e. institutions, participation, networks, collaboration and learning) as well as commoning outcomes and evaluation within a commons food regime. Given that care is the core of a commons food regime, this research represents an attitude and a commitment, with a new set of values, to collective action for self-organising and self-governing a variety of food-related shared resources in any given community regardless of its form, scale and locality. Finally, in section 2.5, the chapter concludes with a vision of entering a new epoch of history through growing a commons food regime.

2.2 Rethinking food regimes theory

2.2.1 Background to food regimes theory

The concept of food regimes was first developed in the 1980s, influenced by the French school of regulation theory as it applied to the non-agricultural economy (Aglietta, 1979; Atkin and Bowler, 2001). Friedmann and McMichael (1989:5) linked 'international relations of food production and consumption' to 'periods of capitalist accumulation'. As a historical concept, it defined specific points in time that oriented international food production and consumption (Friedmann, 1993). The first regime (1870-1939) was marked by colonial forms of agrarian development, wherein commercial farming was specialised, and Europe imported wheat and meat in exchange for European manufactured commodities. The second regime (1950-70s) was defined by the rise of industrialised, durable food production, such as grains and the emergence of a grain-livestock complex centred in the USA.

Friedmann refers to regime as 'regulation', where rules are in place although sometimes hard to identify. These rules, both formal and informal, relate to a stable pattern of accumulation over a period of time before crisis or transformation occurs. A food regime consists of state regulation and Gramsci's definition of 'hegemony', which would be enforced upon institutions, commodity complexities and labour relations (Friedmann, 2009:336). As McMichael asserts, "the food regime concept is a key to unlock not only structured moments and transitions in the history of capitalist food relations, but also the history of capitalism itself" (2009a:281). Despite their slightly different conceptions, 'food regime' is articulated as a 'historically significant cluster of global scale food relationships that contributed to stabilising and underwriting a period of growth in global capitalism' (Campbell and Dixon, 2009:263). For Friedmann and McMichael, according to Buttel:

> *The essence of the world-system as a global-influential logic is that it reflects periodic shifts in hegemonic regimes which are anchored in the politics of how commodity chains and production systems come to be constructed and coordinated over borders and boundaries of the constituent political units within the system (Buttel, 2001:173).*

While Friedmann and McMichael's publication has been praised by Buttel (ibid.) as "the seminal piece of scholarship in the new rural sociology" and "their regime-type work has proven to be one of the most durable perspectives in agrarian studies since the late 1980s", their work has had its share of criticism. Two major strands can be identified. First, Goodman and Watts (1994:1) argue that "the industrial restructuring debates provide an inadequate conceptual architecture for analyses of the dynamics of change in agrarian production structures and rural spatial organisations". They challenge the extension of the periodisation of the food regimes and Fordist-type concepts in the political economy of agriculture. They emphasize the importance of taking history as a process rather than a period, and pay careful attention to emerging counter-trends within different local contexts (Goodman and Watts, 1997).

Another important critique comes from Araghi (2003). In his criticism of the food regimes approach, he suggests an alternative framing that situates the concept of food regimes theory on the basis of the theory of value, instead of the developmentalist periodisation following regulation theory. He argues that a separation from regulation

theory can allow food regimes scholars to focus on the exploited and commodified labour-oriented perspective. According to Araghi, at a time when there is "World hunger amidst global plenty" (ibid:41),when postmodern ideology prevails, and when neo-popularism is seen as a key element of neoliberal politics and unbalanced emphasis on the local and particular, there is an urgency to return to the social problems of labour, and to be aware of researcher's positionality. By positionality he means how one sees the world in order to enable the research subject to be seen as a political project, while avoiding the trap of taking any particular and concrete phenomenon for granted.

2.2.2 An emerging new food regime?

Until the mid-2000s, the food regimes approach was silent about agricultural political economy (Campbell and Dixton, 2009). The food regimes analysis, developed independently by Friedmann and McMichael and many other collaborators, reveals a different approach. The previously structural conception "has been refined over time with historical prompting – both from intellectual debates and from the transformation of the global food economy itself" (McMichael, 2009b:144).

Taking Araghi's critique seriously, food regimes theorists defend themselves against Goodmann and Watt's (1994) critique by re-enhancing the centrality of value relations in the food regime approach. They assert that regime theory never closes down the potential of non-linear capitalist development and the politics of food on a global scale. Although there are generally periods of consolidation of power and movement behind one food regime thus providing stability within the larger agri-food system, stability does not mean lack of change, but stabilized tensions and a juggling of contradictory movements. Thus, when a crisis occurs, due to social, ecological, economic or political dynamics, there is a corresponding period of instability and a confluence of multiple trajectories that seek solutions, and propose alternatives to be developed into a dominant model. For example, a set of different ideologies, institutions, regulations and policies in the first and the second regime can be revealed. The transition from the first to second regimes (via the Great Depression) consisted of a crisis in which almost every old aspect in the former was dramatically transformed. The moral behind this investigation is that 'systems can be changed' (Campbell and Dixon, 2009:264). Although the second food regime did not bring any justice to most of the world's population, the level of transformation was powerful enough to motivate scholars to reveal both theoretically and empirically the 'composition' and 'de-composition' of a new food regime.

Against this context, a symposium was set up to mark the 20th anniversary of Friedmann and McMichael's (1989) key article, and to reflect on the following issues: (1) a food regime analysis of understanding capitalist modernity such as different forms of capital accumulation, power and value relations and institutional arrangements on a global scale; (2) the centrality of food relations to cultural politics and framings in the areas such as changing nutritional and dietary patterns; (3) engagement with ecological dimensions, especially the recent politicised ecology such as ethical consumption and green capitalism; (4) new dynamics of financialisation, biotechnology and integration of corporate and retail sectors; (5) the role of food movements in the development of a new food regime.

So what is the situation through the lens of a food regime approach?

As Friedmann (2009:335) suggests, “Thinking about food regime transition and/or emergence is partly empirical, partly definitional”. No consensus has been reached as to whether we have already entered into a new food regime.

Burch and Lawrence (2009) argue for a ‘financialised food regime’. This includes the integration of power and property including new opportunities for hedge funds and supermarkets entering the banking systems, and shifting their role from food retailers to capital providers. The extent to which financial capital has penetrated the entire food supply chain and created a shift in life science (by consolidating agri-food industries, chemicals and seed industries, as well as hormones and antibiotics in livestock industries), offers an echo to Goodman’s phrase “from farming to biotechnology” (Goodman et al., 1987). However, while Friedmann agrees with this financialised tendency in the economy overall, she also points out that the accumulation of power and property is not equal to a food regime change. For example, there is a lack of institutions to stabilise these financialised food systems and we need to consider the challenges from social movement actors and ethical consumers.

McMichael (2009a) argues that the food regime concept is not only about food, but provides a lens to see food as an element in capitalist history. He contends that a corporate/neoliberal food regime emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, based on the evidence that the ‘world food crisis’ of 2007-2008 was in fact a long-term cycle of the complex compound situation of fossil-fuel dependence on industrial capitalism, financial speculation and the concentration of agribusiness – all related to neoliberal policies. Recognising that the term ‘corporate food regime’ indeed embodies the tensions between a trajectory of ‘world agriculture’ and cultural survival, expressed in the politics of food sovereignty, McMichael explains his decision to use the term to channel our resources and develop the new emerging food regime (McMichael, 2005:274). His analysis of the food sovereignty movement outlines three major shifts in this emerging food regime: first, an epistemological shift in viewing food as more than a commodity or object, but as a social, cultural, ecological and spiritual relationship (2009a:282); second, food sovereignty has managed to mobilise the state, with policy changes at different levels, from the local to the global, resulting in certain transformations of the state system; and third, a shift of ontology grounded in the appreciation of the significance of agriculture and sustainability that promises a future beyond the ‘science of profit’ that is the mark of the neoliberal world (McMichael, 2008:212-213).

Whereas McMichael favours the notion of a ‘corporate food regime’ characterising the neoliberal world order, Friedmann is more cautious about identifying such a phenomenon at present, choosing instead to speak of an emerging ‘corporate-environment’ food regime (2005). Friedmann claims that the private sectors have taken the lead in trying to incorporate a wide range of environmental categories and agendas relating to food and agriculture which herald a new ‘green capitalism’, creating tensions: “states, firms, social movements, and citizens are entering a new political era characterised by a struggle over the relative weight of private, public and self-organised institutions” (2005:259).

Campbell (2009) and Dixon (2009) both represent a new approach to food regimes theory. Unlike other food regimes scholars, Dixon brings the human body to the fore. She traces the ideologies of nutrition along with different food regimes – from the ‘imperial calorie’ through the ‘protective’ vitamin to the ‘empty calorie’ – which are central to state and class relations. Specifically, she analyses, defines and explains how

the ‘nutritionalisation’ of national and international food systems has continued to be defined by governments stretching their power from the public to domestic (private) arenas. She discusses Harbermas’ discourse of ‘social histories of sugar and dairy’ revealing a transition between two forms of rationality: value-neutral or so-called ‘evidence-based’ nutritional knowledge and ‘communicative’ rationality, which goes beyond concerns about means and ends, and incorporates customs, emotions and social contexts. In so doing, Dixon explores these cultural dynamics as well as introducing the notion of hegemony. An example is the ‘Orientalisation’ of cuisines around the globe, which reflects, on the one hand, the tensions between industrial/transnational and artisanal/regional foods but, on the other hand, a power shift towards Asia (Friedmann, 2009:341).

Campbell (2009) applies a socio-ecological resilience theory to examine the emerging global-scale of environmental governance for food auditing in order to understand cultural politics and social legitimacy in the two contending new food ‘regimes’: ‘Food from nowhere regime’ versus ‘Food from somewhere regime’, both regimes being mutually constitutive; the poor still suffer from the former and the privileged consumers demand the latter. Drawing from Friedmann’s notion of social movement to challenge regime cultures, Campbell contends that while the ‘food from somewhere regime’ does open new spaces for our relations to food, the paths to ecological resilience seem to remain in the mist: “Resolving this tension is central to any attempt to continue opening up space for future, more sustainable, global-scale food relations” (Campbell, 2009:360).

Food regimes map out not only political and economic processes underpinning the logic of the food supply chain, but encompass a cultural politic that frames and legitimates these practices through providing an overall framework, by the “institutional structures, norms and unwritten rules, that shape the political economy of food and agriculture at a global level” (Pechlaner and Otero, 2008:352). Pritchard (2009, cited in Martinez-Gomez et al., 2013:3) maintains that the essential feature of the food regimes approach is that it is best used as ‘a tool of hindsight’ to help order and organise the messy reality of contemporary global food politics. However, its applications are necessarily contingent upon an uncertain future. On this point, we now move forward to discuss implications of this transitional period of the world politics of food.

2.2.3 Reflections on food regimes theory towards sustainable transitions

The aim of this research is a modest response to Friedmann and Michael’s call for a new food regime. In a broad sense, underlying this response is an explicit endeavour for sustainable transition alternatives to the current dominant neoliberal food regime. In understanding the theory of transition, I make use of Wilson’s (2007:14) notion that transition “should be seen as a theoretical framework that attempts to understand and unravel socio-economic, political, cultural and environmental complexities of societal transitions (or sub-systems of society such as agriculture) from one state of organisation to another”. As this brief account of food regimes theory reveals, identification of attributes and dynamics of the development of food and agriculture, as they relate to capitalism, are multifaceted and complex. I make no claim that my short account of food regimes theory is exhaustive, and recognise that others summarising the wealth of insights from the evolution of food regime theory would be likely to generate a

somewhat different picture. Nevertheless, as McMichael suggests, the authority of the food regime concept is 'a public good' (2009b:163), which represents different ways of understanding and interpreting the food system. I would like to take Friedmann's 'invitation' (2009:335) to join in the conversation of the food regimes theory. In this regards, I have five reflections on food regimes theory.

First, an interdisciplinary and collaborative research agenda has been identified as an important direction for future food regimes thinking. Friedmann (2009) suggests an active engagement between an actor network theory and food regimes. Networks allow one to trace different 'actants,' including humans and non-humans in order to overcome the mental barriers between social and natural science, dichotomies of local and global, markets and social movements. This bottom-up approach can complement political economy especially during the transitional periods. This detailed investigation and 'follow-up' allow the actors to help us understand and pinpoint the emerging trends of social movements, organisations, and individuals. In short, Actant Network Theory and food regimes theory can be complimentary to each other. While the former gives the latter more precision, the latter reminds the former to address the questions such as ideologies, norms, and power in shaping food regimes (ibid).

Similarly, the food regime approach can be used in tandem with political ecology (Raynolds, 1997) to understand the varied, complex and messy social processes that determine whether and how the structural constructions are 'realised' on the ground in different contexts. McMichael states that, however, a food regime perspective, is not intended to offer a comprehensive understanding of food cultures and relationships across the world, and in no way assumes that all food production and consumption adhere to this pattern (McMichael, 2000). Since place, scale and interactions as well as agency and difference within power relations embedded in social networks are dominant themes in the political ecology literature (Escobar, 1998, 2001, 2004; Rochleau et al., 1996; Braun and Castree, 1998; Whatmore, 2002; Robbins, 2011), an integrated and dynamic framework is recommended when we conduct a critical analysis of capitalist development in relation to agro-food systems.

Second, theory is constantly in-the-making. From the genealogy of food regimes, we can see the changes and trajectories within different generations of scholarship: from the outset, its initial formulation which is primarily structural, moves towards a more inclusive approach in at least three ways: (1) to open up new spaces for transitions and sites of resistance; (2) from predominantly rural sociology towards the entire food systems incorporating food production to food consumption; and (3) to elaborate the multiple dimensions of food – an understanding of food as nutrient, ingredient, intermediary, cultural performance and social reproduction. This evolution of theorisation is considered 'intervention as politics' by Le Heron and Lewis (2009), which show its performative and generative potential. They consider the relationship between food regimes with other fields of work such as population and health, biofuels, environmental regulations and many other forms of alternative food movements, from alternative food networks (Marsden, 2002; Maye et al., 2007; Goodman et al., 2012), ecological public health paradigm (Lang et al., 2009); sustainable food systems (Blay-Palmer, 2010); slow food (Fonte, 2006; Petrini, 2007); vegetarianism (D'Silva and Webster, 2010); eco-imperialism (Shiva, 2009) and food sovereignty such as Via Campesina (McMicahel, 2008; Holt-Giménez et al., 2009; Perfecto et al., 2009; Patel, 2009) just to name a few. For Le Heron and Lewis (2009:348), the food regimes concept provides a possible contextual frame, and "serves as a spine... for assembling both the

different dimensions of food political economy and the different literatures of the past 20 years". The challenge is precisely to create new venues and conditions to encourage new and diverse disciplines and scholarship to connect with each other for further politicised knowledge production at this transitional period of history.

The third reflection relates to Marx's motto – "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it". Food regimes theory carries a political and ethical agenda. Friedmann (2005) suggests that we are witnessing the emergence of a new food regime. A myriad of forces are shaping the emerging food regime. Friedmann also argues that social movements have an important role to play in challenging the existing paradigm and proposing a new one. Similarly, McMichael also calls for a new food regime in the 21st century. While he accepts the importance of 'value relations' to help us understand how capital undermines agriculture and its ecological limitations, he argues that we have to be aware of the danger that these value relations ultimately might constrain our pursuit of an alternative food system. This alternative food system might go beyond market logic and adopt a new organising principle with an ecological focus, which then might reverse the situation of 'metabolic rift' as Marx's term "for the separation of social production from its natural biological base" (McMichael, 2009b:161). Consequently, he argues that the essence of a new food regime in the 21st century is to foster an ontology, epistemology and ethic that seek to revitalise the 'centrality of agriculture' originally proposed by Duncan (1996, 2009), as a foundation. It brings a new vision, 'regarding how we live on the earth, and how we live together' (McMichael, 2009b:164).

Indeed, as Le Heron and Lewis (2009) suggest, food regimes scholars seem to connect their own participation in a variety of political movements to their academic work, which provides a new architecture of food regime theorisation. These direct engagements help them to explore the key challenges and contradictions in the contemporary food systems. Food regime theory represents a more engaging type of intellectual endeavour, bringing theory to point to a new direction in the politics of that world. This particular vision is part of my academic-activist identity, introduced in the previous chapter.

In my view, however, food regimes theory lacks a 'bottom-up' approach directly associated with social change. This is arguably the weakest part of this theory. This brings in ***the fourth reflection*** and the most critical one. Food regimes theory provides a comprehensive and profound analysis of our relationship with food and agriculture in a capitalist system at different stages of history. While food regimes theory intends to provoke deep change in the current unsustainable food systems and calls for a regime change, we have little understanding of how we can actually engage with change as an ordinary person in our everyday life. I argue that only relying on interpreting the world is not sufficient to change the world until we place ourselves actively within the process of change. Furthermore, as a result of the crisis we currently face, not only have we to commit ourselves to the process of social change, but we also need to collaborate with other like-minded people and organisations to allow wider transformation to take place as well as influencing other people who are not taking part in this process.

As we have seen, the landscape of food movements, interpreting and responding to the global food crisis is complex and diverse. Several approaches and narratives that enable us to address this food crisis can be identified, in broad terms. These represent four dominant trends in the food systems – Neoliberal, Reformist, Progressive and Radical (Holt-Giménez and Shattuck, 2011). The Neoliberal trend focuses on how to maintain

and reproduce the current food regime. The Reformist trend employs a food security discourse, orientated "toward state-led assistance and seeks to regulate, but not directly challenge market forces" (Holt-Giménez and Shattuck, 2011:121). The Progressive trend – more visible in the North – is arguably the largest and most rapid growth of grassroots movements in food and agriculture related fields. It employs discourses such as food democracy and food justice based on participation, empowerment and pro-poor orientation and community development (Alkon and Norgaard, 2009; Levkoe 2006; Lang, 2005; Lang et al., 2009). Finally, the Radical trend, as its name suggests, 'seeks deep, structural changes to food and agriculture' (Holt-Giménez and Shattuck, 2011:128), challenges the existing unequal power relations and wealth in the current global food system, and brings in the notion of 'entitlement' to pursue a radical transformation of society. Food sovereignty is its main discourse, defined as 'the right of peoples to define their own food and agriculture' and it aims to democratise the entire food system (Windfuhr and Jonsen, 2005; Altieri, 2008; Rosset, 2008; Martinez-Torres and Rosset, 2010).

Recognising the fragmented quality of current food movements, there is an urgent need for strategic alliances (Holt-Giménez and Shattuck, 2011) and 'convergence in diversity' (Amin, 2011), especially among the Progressive and Radical trends, which demands the 'repoliticisation' of social movements. This approach resonates well with two possible pathways towards a new food regime, also suggested by Friedmann (1993) – food movements and food policy – to promote a more inclusive foundation for new food relationships. In another words, there is an emerging focus in the literature that promotes civil society as a key change agent (Hinrichs, 2010; Koc, 2010; Hinrichs and Lyson, 2008; Morgan et al., 2006). However, sceptics to these alternative food narratives (Economist, 2011), especially of the Radical trend, challenge the need for and feasibility of such broad-reaching structural reforms. They also remain sceptical of the ability to reach a sufficient scale and argue that any changes must involve, if not come from, existing major players.

While different approaches and trends to resolve the global food crisis have their specific focuses, I argue that all these differences actually belong to the terrain of food governance – with different levels of control over our relationship to food and agriculture in general. Writing in the context of alternative food networks, Marsden (2002, 2008) argues that in order to develop agro-food studies, it is significant to consider the questions of 'food governance', which raise the issues of a new politics of food and governance systems and the structure of powers among state, NGOs and civil society. While Marsden points out that food politics and governance is never equal within global, national and regional economies which tend to prioritise some actors and discourses and marginalise others, it is nevertheless an opportunity to enrol more diverse actors and institutions into its networks, to exercise, interpret and reflect upon our overarching goals, processes and mechanism, and translate ideas into actions. He argues that "a more ecological and post-structural political economy can be made more relevant by accommodating the question of food governance" (2002:28).

This brings me to ***the final reflection*** on the different definitions of 'regime'. According to Kindiki (2011:22), 'regimes' refer to at least five things in social science. First, a regime is a kind of government or administration. Second, it can be a 'designed mode of organisation', a set of rules for tax, food, and trade. These two definitions are commonly used both in political economy and everyday speech. Third, a regime can be applied not only to an issue area or an action situation but to a region of time, an 'emergent mode

of organisation'. This relates to the French school of regulation theory, with a specific use of the term 'regime of accumulation'. The time dimension highlights the long cycles of the international political economy with technological and institutional structures and practices at a global level. Fourth, regime is a 'designed mode of governance', which relates to an institutional structure under which, for example, an international free market for food and agriculture operates at a particular time, such as the one promoted by the WTO (World Trade Organisation). An important element within this definition of a regime is its emphasis on agency - usually driven by an explicit 'self-interested' agenda. The fifth and final definition refers to a regime as an 'emergent mode of governance'. This is the strictest understanding of a regime, which is not designed or imposed but operates on a voluntary basis, an emergent and spontaneous way to organise those who are involved within a given situation. The process of industrial clusters and communal organisations governing natural resources, for example, can be seen as a typical example of this emergent structure of self-organisation. While the third and the fifth definitions share the common characteristic of emergence, a regime of accumulation is structured according to time over the long cycles within which the fifth kind of regime (emergent mode of governance) would flourish.

In food regimes theory, the regime primarily refers to the third definition as 'regime of accumulation' but it is not altogether clear if food regime scholars are aware of other kinds of regime in the social sciences. Writing in the context of international regimes, Krasner's frequently-cited definition of regimes was also adopted by food regime scholars (see Friedmann 1993, 2005, 2009). For Krasner, international regimes are "sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectation converge" (Krasner,1983:2). I see the potential of the interplay between the designed and emergent mode of governance as a possible pathway to move away from a passive food regime (i.e. conceptualising agri-food development within the capitalist system) towards an active one (i.e. where people on the ground can work together and decide how 'agri-food related shared resources', whether tangible – e.g. land, seeds, water – or intangible – e.g. culture, knowledge – are used and governed).

As an academic-activist, I have a vision of the development of a new food regime guided by a set of values and norms. This regime must consist of a designed and explicit mode of governance. Since any regime is nested within a wider or higher regime (e.g. international regimes as one of the largest scales across the globe), as well as engaging multiple actors, these are bound to be emergent and generate dynamic interactions throughout the evolution of regime-building. However, I have chosen to emphasise the fact that regimes are primarily social institutions or institutional arrangements, rather than the more technical 'rules and procedures' side of regimes.

More specifically, drawing on the new institutionalism perspective, I focus on the notion of the commons mode of governance regime which is characterised by self-governance, self-organisation and collective-action over the use of resource (e.g. Rosenau, 1995; Ostrom, 2005). Governance refers here to the way that humans try to explore ways of making decisions to achieve more desirable outcomes (Ostrom, 1990). Indeed, this kind of regime is at the root of other resource governance regimes, associated with the notion of a 'common-property regime', meaning "institutional arrangements for the cooperative (shared, joint, collective) use, management, and sometimes ownership of natural resources" (McKean, 2000:27). Inspired by this insight, in the next section, I propose to discuss in more detail the concept of commons regimes. Unlike being regarded as 'a tool of hindsight' (Pritchard, 2009, cited in Martinez-Gomez et al., 2013:3) of the current

food regimes theory, I aim to develop ‘a tool of insight’ by making use of the essence of the new food regime articulated by both Friedmann (2005) and McMichael (2009b), that is, a food regime based on the principles of social justice and ecological integrity, towards sustainability of social-ecological systems as a whole.

2.3 Exploring commons regimes in a complex world

2.3.1 Another kind of regime: the rise of commons regimes in a complex world

From a new institutionalism perspective, the emphasis is on the intimate relationship between regimes and resources, as Walls puts it, "the nature of the regime and the effect that regime has on the resource itself is widely acknowledged and keenly debated" (Walls, 2011:36). Following Ostrom, resources are defined by excludability and subtractability (Ostrom and Ostrom, 1977) where the former relates to the ease with which access to the benefits of a resource can be controlled, while the latter, subtractability (also referred to as rivalry) refers to the extent to which one person's use of a resource reduces the goods available for others. This results in a two-dimensional categorisation of resource (see Table 2.1). Commons is a general term that refers to a resource shared by a group of people, which has its root in broad and interdisciplinary research into the governance and management of natural resources. In a natural commons, the resource can range from a small piece of arable land serving a tiny group, to a community-level resource (fisheries, water, or forest). The commons can be well bounded (a community park) or across a transboundary (the Amazon River).

		Subtractability	
		Low	**High**
Exclusion	Difficult (or costly)	Public goods Useful knowledge Sunsets	Common-pool resources Libraries Irrigation systems
	Easy	Toll or club goods Journal subscriptions Day-care centres	Private goods Personal computers Doughnuts

Table 2.1 Resource types (adapted from Ostrom, 2005:24)

For generations, the commons were assumed to be disappearing. However, they never disappear from human history. After Hardin's (1968) influential article 'Tragedy of the Commons', theoretical work on the commons was developed in a rather rapid way. Hardin argued that the individual is not capable of managing or destroying common resources due to self-interest in the matter of their own vision of the commons. However, commons scholars have repeatedly found this statement to be mistaken: (1) Hardin confounded the resource with its governance regime (Ciriacy-Wantrup and Bishop, 1975); (2) he assumed that there was little or no communication among users; (3) he had little or no hope in individuals' willingness and/or capacity to take joint actions and to share mutual interests; and (4) he only provided two solutions to avoid the tragedy – privatization or government intervention.

In her seminal book, *Governing the Commons*, Ostrom provides diverse and richly detailed case studies on agricultural production in varied social and ecological settings. Based on her analysis, she proposed eight principles that she associated with sustainable resource governance as measured by the survival of the resource system over long periods of time (Ostrom, 1990). These principles were discovered after conducting a large set of empirical studies on common-pool resource governance. The eight factors identified were those found to exist in successful natural resource regimes. Although the

reactions have been mixed, Cox et al. (2010) synthesised a large number of studies that examined Ostrom's design principles and argued that the principles are well supported but require some reformulations (1,2,4) as follows:

1. Clearly defined boundaries should be in place.
   a. User boundaries: clear boundaries between legitimate users and non-users must be clearly defined.
   b. Resource boundaries: clear boundaries are present that define a resource system and separate it from the larger biophysical environment.
2. Rules in use are well matched to local needs and conditions.
   a. Congruence with local conditions; appropriation and the provision of rules are congruent with local social and environmental conditions.
   b. Appropriation and provision: the benefits obtained by users from a common-pool resource, as determined by appropriation rules, are proportional to the amount of inputs required in the form of labour, material, or money, as determined by provision rules.
3. Individuals affected by these rules can usually participate in modifying the rules.
4. The right of community members to devise their own rules is respected by external authorities.
   a. Monitoring users: monitors who are accountable to the users monitor the appropriation and provision levels of the users.
   b. Monitoring the resources: monitors who are accountable to the users monitor the condition of the resource.
5. A system for self-monitoring members' behaviour has been established.
6. A graduated system of sanctions is available.
7. Community members have access to low-cost conflict-resolution mechanisms.
8. Nested enterprises – that is appropriation, provision, monitoring and sanctioning, conflict resolution, and other governance activities – are organized in a nested structure with multiple layers of activities (Cox et al., 2010:15).

Indeed, in recent years, far from disappearing, one can observe 'the growth of the commons paradigm' (Bollier, 2007) or in Clippinger and Bollier's (2005) words, a 'renaissance of the commons'. This vast arena is inhabited by diverse groups and disciplines ranging from different political interests and philosophies across many geographical regions, both inside and outside academia. People are increasingly finding the term 'commons' crucial in addressing issues of social dilemmas, degradation, and sustainability of a wide variety of shared resources. According to Hess (2008), a variety of approaches of the 'new commons' – different from the traditional natural commons and not necessarily applicable to Ostrom's design principles – evolve or come into being, from protecting the commons from enclosure, producing new commons through collaboration and networks based on voluntary reciprocity, using commons as a pedagogical device, creating new economic models and rediscovering the commons.

Furthermore, in addition to traditional commons, Hess (ibid) maps out seven sectors of new commons based on types of resource. These include: (1) cultural commons; (2) neighbourhood commons; (3) infrastructure commons; (4) knowledge commons; (5) medical and health commons; (6) market commons; and (7) global commons.

Among these new commons, a number of observations are important. First, there is a common ethos that they all value collaboration, cooperation and sharing. Second, there is a flexibility of scales from the local community level up to the global arena due to new technologies such as the internet or a complex infrastructure or its tangible forms of commons, such as cultural and knowledge commons. Third, the diversity and heterogeneity of the new commons expands to encompass different types of resources (i.e. public goods, club goods, and even private goods). However, these scholars recognise the importance of having certain rules and norms to manage these shared resources. Fourth, global commons has been identified as both the oldest and most established 'new commons', with the broadest foci, ranging from climate change and the deep sea ocean, to international treaties and cultural and social commons. Finally, these new commons suggest ambivalent relationships between the new commons, the market and the state, with capitalism itself having been identified as a new commons.

In studying the traditional natural commons, scholars point out the importance of the differences between a commons as a resource or resource system and a commons as a property-rights regime as they tend to conflate the two terms (Hess and Ostrom, 2003:119). Shared resource systems – called common-pool resources – are types of economic goods, independent of particular property rights. In this sense, access to the commons, is not the same as liberal ownership rights (Mitchell, 2005:71). Common property on the other hand is a legal regime – a jointly owned legal set of rights (Bromley, 1986; Ciriacy-Wantrup and Bishop, 1975). Thus common property is not open to all but access is limited to a specific group of users who share in common (McKean, 2000:30).

In this thesis, however, the more general term commons is chosen to describe the complexity and variability of different kinds of resources of food and to embrace a more inclusive term, encompassing both common-pool resources and common property regimes. It is close to Clippinger and Bollier's (2005, cited in Hess, 2008:35) definition of 'commons' as "a social regime for managing shared resources and forging a community of shared values and purpose". I use the term 'commons regimes' to represent a self-organising governance system for any kind of shared resources, with a mixture of institutions, formal and informal, relating to the application of rules, norms, and principles shaped by a full range of contextual factors. This regime is expressed in the interplay between designed and emergent modes of governance situated in nested hierarchical systems. In the next section, we will explore appropriate governance principles in a complex world. It is important to note that the review focuses on governance for the natural commons, as there are very few examples of governance of non-natural commons such as knowledge commons (Hess and Ostrom, 2007) and security commons (Walls, 2011) which in any case have developed, based on insights from governance for the natural commons.

The concept of a 'complex adaptive system' highlights the dynamic, non-linear and emergent nature of governing the natural commons in the social-ecological systems. This invites us to consider what kind of governance system may encourage this kind of creative solution, and how to manage destructive elements inherent in complex systems. Due to its key characteristics of being robust, adaptable, and efficient, commons governance – i.e. self-organisation, self-governance, and collective actions (cooperation) – has been identified as one of the most important governance systems towards real world sustainability in dynamic landscapes such as our complex world (Ostrom, 1990; Olsson et el., 2004; Levin, 2006; Vincent, 2007; Floke, 2007; Ostrom, 2009). The

general consensus is that understanding the multiple effects of scale, heterogeneity and dynamics represents one of the most difficult analytical challenges as they involve huge numbers of variables in a complex, multi-level world (Poteete et al., 2010:245).

This leads to a 'multi-level', 'collaborative' and 'learning' governance approach (Delmas and Young, 2009; Duit and Galaz, 2008; Vatn, 2009; Young et al., 2006; Amitage, 2008). There are different terms describing this kind of governance orientation, such as adaptive governance (Folke et al., 2005; Brunner et al., 2005); adaptive co-management (Folke et al., 2005; Brunner et al., 2005), polycentric or multi-layered governance (Ostrom et al., 2002; Ostrom, 2005), adapting institutions (Boyd and Folke, 2012), interactive governance (Kooiman et al., 2005), and resilience management (Walker et al., 2002). Though different terms have their own disciplinary roots, each of these shares the importance of adaptive management as a way to deal with uncertainty and complexity and the linkages within individuals, micro-institutions and their wider contexts (Amitage, 2008). These approaches all illustrate the power of scale; what governance innovations can be developed, how networks can be linked across scales and systems; the political implications of the interventions; and the appropriation and legitimacy of knowledge and interpretation. As Berkes (2008:5) rightly points out, the choice of scale and level has significant implication in governing any commons, which requires deliberation, negotiation and even conflict management. From a social constructivist perspective, certain types of discourse would be interpreted and implemented in commons governance in any particular context. Drawing insights from political ecology, Armitage (2008:22) asserts that exploring multiple pathways and trajectories of change, as well as processes of self-organisation and interpretation of these processes, undoubtedly relies on human values and power relations. This reflection, however, points to a major ideological divide. The next section draws out challenges from anti-capitalist perspectives, which argue for a radical transformation as the existing system is untenable.

2.3.2 Challenges from anti-capitalist perspectives

With the increasing popularity of the commons discourse, there appears to be a warning call for critical engagement with the term commons. A deeper analysis of the socio-political nature of the revival of the commons seems to reveal that among the web of complex drivers, the current situation has its roots in the anti-capitalist paradigm.

The first challenge: historical roots and current relevance of the commons

The first challenge relates to the historical roots and current relevance of the commons. While acknowledging Ostrom and her colleagues' contributions to the study of commons, Caffentzis (2004, 2010) argues that their work hardly supports anti-capitalist and alter-globalisation movements. He points out that Ostrom and her colleagues see the commons as an ideal test case for social theory and management, and that studying commons is like studying a firm. The problems of the commons relate to an issue of governance and management demanding appropriate institutional designs and knowledge about how to achieve efficiency, equity and sustainability of shared resources in order to avoid a 'tragedy of commons'. Anti-capitalists, in his view, look to the larger class context to understand what determines the dynamics of commons governance. The class clash occurs because while Ostrom and her colleagues focus on the situation to find out exogenous variables and the appropriate institutional arrangements that drive

the drama of the commons, anti-capitalists see these 'exogenous variables' as part of the violence of the history of commons and enclosures.

Addressing these root causes requires a transformation of not only institutional governance systems but also our socio-economic structure as a whole. Caffentzis (2004) considers the notion of 'compatibility' of commons within capitalism. This is encouraging, but by no means sufficient. Rather, he calls upon efforts to investigate what kind of commons will increase the power of people against capital and for radical transformation. Although such radical developments do create windows of opportunities for alliances with powerful reformist forces within capitalism, he insists that one should not be confused by the fundamental differences between these two political tendencies and their practices of the commons. Without a deeper understanding of the subtle distinction between pro-capitalist commons and anti-capitalist commons, the risk might be further accumulation of neoliberal capitalism.

The second challenge: why capitalism cannot change its unsustainable mode of production

The second challenge considers why capitalism cannot change its unsustainable mode of production, marked by its nature of exploitation in terms of its relationship to nature and to humans on the one hand, and its obsession with continuous economic growth in the pursuit of profit on the other. As Turner and Brownhill (2010:102) observed at the December 2009 Copenhagen People's Assembly: "System change, not climate change". This refers to the wide consensus about the necessity to change the exploitative nature of the capitalist system, which in turn would help to avoid climate meltdown. Progressive thinking presents a new vision of the future along the line of a reciprocal, cooperative, regenerative system where human-nature relationship is in harmony – a commons-linked economy. As Einstein states, "We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them".

Reading capitalism through the lens of systems theory, Biel (2011) argues that this not only depletes physical resources but also exhausts the social and ecological repair-systems within capitalist society. As we have seen in the previous section, adaptive capacity is well-linked with resource management and the commons. Similarly, Biel argues that there is reciprocal movement of the two variables between human capacity and physical resource depletion: when the scope of capacity (grassroots innovation, institutional experimentations) goes down, the scope of resource-depletion goes up. While Ostrom and her colleagues repeatedly assert that human beings are 'adaptive creatures', with an innate self-organising capacity for collective decision-making and problem-solving, Biel pushes the frontier to another level, arguing that self-organisation can be the base of all systems. This is the kind of social organisation that is desirable in the face of social and ecological crises we are facing. However, this kind of governance system is very complex, requires large human capacity, and cannot be achieved without certain conditions. Simply put, people at least have to be fed healthy and nutritious food, and have access to all sorts of resources, both tangible (e.g. natural resources, shelters and health care) and intangible (e.g. knowledge, culture, and security), to allow them to adapt and develop. Both endogenous and exogenous conditions have to be met in order for society to unleash such potential.

Biel asserts that, within capitalism, commons represents historical battles over 'regimes' – in its strictest sense referring to commons regimes, i.e. popular resource-governance

regimes as this is the mode of organisation that capitalism hates and fears, precisely because its effectiveness makes appropriation difficult. However, the usual hostility of capitalism towards commons does not exclude the possibility of allowing it to happen. Biel argues that community is an absolute area where capitalism 'must' intervene for two particular reasons: first, to avoid any communities becoming too radical and second, there is a free resource emerging from such communities that capitalism cannot afford to neglect. In the UK, during the Blair government, the discourse of 'sustainable communities', was accompanied by a strict quality of surveillance. As for today, the Coalition government has passed a series of public expenditures in the name of the small state and the 'Big Society' and support for 'the commons' narrative. In Biel's view, this is a form of co-option in the promotion of the commons.

In short, it is about bringing about a normal sense of 'security': a non-militarist approach to security. In reference to redefining security, he writes: "having clawed its identity away from the militaristic discourse, this redefinition of security would become a principle for the rebuilding of society, embracing the unpredictability of emergent order as a cause for hope, rather than of fear, and as the only pathway to the eventual stability of a new mode of production" (2011:343). However, in a deeper sense, this capacity-intensive development approach to organise common popular resources for the whole of humanity cannot be achieved under capitalism.

The third challenge: a holistic vision from an ecosocialist/ecofeminism perspective

Precisely this notion of 'common popular resources of humankind for all' leads to the discussion of the third challenge: a holistic vision of rebuilding a society through the production of commons as an alternative to capitalism. This holistic vision is particularly evident in the ecosocialist and ecofeminism perspective. As Brownhill et al. state, "the idea of the commons is being utilised to reconceive the practice of democracy in horizontal, egalitarian social relations, and ecological informed subsistence-oriented livelihood practices…[which] underlines ongoing local-to-planetary efforts to marshal power to reverse and un-do corporate enclosures" (Brownhill et al., 2012:94). Indeed, ultimately, people need to be presented as sources of inspiration, information and direction for the global project of inventing 21st century commons.

Witnessing the level of crisis in Kenya and many other African countries (e.g. the East African famine of 2011 and ongoing chronic malnutrition and hunger), Brownhill et al. (2012) explicitly emphasise the importance of ecosocialism, with its Marxist influence, aiming at challenging production, power relations, and a transformation in our relations both with each other and with nature. 'De-alienation' challenges the concept 'de-growth' as being too slow and too late. With its focus on the issue of 'overconsumption', detached from social and historical understandings and struggles, it is argued, 'de-growth' may run the risk of falling into a kind of green capitalism. Drawn from Marx's four aspects of the process of alienation, 'de-alienation' proposes four principles for eliminating alienation. Table 2.2 illustrates the principles of degrowth, alienation and de-alienation.

Degrowth Latouche's eight Rs	Alienation Marx's alienation	De-alienation Individual and social
The political project of a conrete utopia for degrowth: • Re-valuation • Reconceptualisation • Reconstruction • Relocalisation • Redistribution • Reduction • Re-use • Recycling	Alienation or estrangement of labouring people from: • Products of labour and the natural world • The labour process • Species-being (one's body, one's spiritual life and external nature) • Other humans	"De-alienation" or reversing estrangement by: • Re-integrating with others • Re-conceiving ourselves as individuals as part of the universal • Returning control over processes of production to producers • Regaining dominion over the products of labour

Table 2.2 The principles of degrowth, alienation and de-alienation (Source: Brownhill et al., 2012:94)

'De-alienation' is a gendered interpretation of Marxist 'alienation' – historically, women have been separated from their means of survival and have been 'colonised' and 'enslaved' by men, religions, the state and the region. Brownhill et al. (2012) emphasise women's strategic position in the battle of global anti-capitalist movement, grounded in women's crucial and contended responsibility for and stewardship over aspects of fertility that are pre-conditions of capitalist accumulation and social control.

Rather than shying away from engaging in real politics, it is worth noting that, 'de-alienation' is grounded in people's movements in Kenya, in defence and re-appropriation of the commons through embracing the concept of 'people's sovereignty'. These movements do not adopt democracy based on elite competitive election but consider a wide range of direct democracy, experimenting with new modes of horizontal, participatory and collaborative citizen participation, together with indigenous practices of consensus making. For example, while these movements refused the proposal of an African Green Revolution led by the Gates-Rockefeller Foundation, they welcomed the idea of indigenous communal land use to develop a new system integrating energy and food production that is fossil-fuel free. These continuous and long-term struggles by dispossessed people fighting for anti-enclosures of property and public provisions resulted in a historic 'victory' in Kenya. A new people-positive constitution, announced in 2010, gave supremacy to peoples' rights to control the resources of the country.

While giving importance to women's political role, it is equally important to ally with men and 'organic intellectuals' to use a phrase from ecosocialist/ecofeminist practice (Tuner and Brownhill, 2010:104) – who share the same ethos for defending all life goods for all. Indeed, to challenge the cross-cutting problems on a global scale requires agency on multiple fronts – across classes, genders, and social movements – literally every individual within a complex interaction among different social agents. In this regard, de-alienation, with its scope of all-encompassing liberation of the whole of society, environment and politics, calls for "the 'replacement' of the capital relation with the recovery of 'species-being' and the re-invention of the gendered commons" (Brownhill et al., 2012:98). Both the process and outcomes are social in that rebuilding the commons and the social relationships of commoning are dialectically evolving and cannot be separated. 'Species-being', in particular, speaks to the interrelationships between one self and many 'others' – a unity and integration of people, life, society and ecology, both materially and spiritually. The case of Kenya's social movements demonstrates the

possibility that people can move beyond their own groups and communities and start to think of a systematic change to the whole region and global political economy.

This reconfiguration of the ecosocialist/ecofeminism approach avoids the 'uncritical analysis' of tradition occurring in certain discourses of ecofeminism. This 'uncritical analysis' often ignores patriarchy, racism and other forms of oppression and the 'limited access to political and economic resources and public-decision making' of women (Cochrane, 2003, 2007), which prevents them from becoming active and effective agents for environmental regeneration (Agarwal, 2001:15). In this sense, we must be aware that if we frame commons only around the global crises in the big picture we might eclipse the immediacy of crisis at the local level and marginalise the urgent needs of the poor (Pithouse, 2010, cited in Bollier, 2010:25). The issue of 'exclusion' – in terms of social, political and economic exclusion, both at local and global level – is particularly crucial that we should pay attention to in the current global anti-capitalist movements (Cochrane, 2007).

Despite disparate conceptual schema among diverse anti-capitalist perspectives, two emerging focal points can be identified. The first one is the defence of autonomy of governing shared resources and the second one is the equal importance of the process of commoning and the outcomes of such endeavour. Governing the commons, in this sense, becomes a conscious project of rebuilding human capacity. While higher priority is given to ground-up, community-based initiatives, governing the commons is multi-levelled and multi-scalar, aiming at an entirely new planet in the 21st century. As Caffentzis (2010:41) points out, the future outside of capitalism is generated by commoning, and the most critical challenge is to ask: "can there be a future without the commons?"

2.3.3 Reflections on optimising the scope of commons regimes

> *An epoch in modern history has ended. The growth imperative of market capitalism is evidently endangering the ecosystem. Confidence in governments as a reliable steward of people's interests has been shaken. Therefore, a new path forward is coming into focus: The commons! The commons is about reclaiming, sharing and self-governing resources that belong to everyone. As a form of governance it is defending traditional or building new social and institutional systems for managing our resources – water and land, knowledge and seeds, genes and the atmosphere – based on the principles of equity and sustainability. The commons is a practical means for re-inventing society in ways that markets and governments are unable or unwilling to entertain. Commons does not mean resources alone are centre stage, of higher importance are the relationships among us, the commoners, our ways of commoning! (Website introduction, The International Commons Conference, Berlin, 2010[1])*

In section 2.3.1 and 2.3.2 I discussed the concept of commons regimes used in this thesis, that is, a common mode of governance system characterised by self-organisation, collective action, and voluntary, cooperative and reciprocal ways of governing any kind of shared resources, both tangible and intangible. It is a mixture of institutions (formal and informal rules) designed by users and communities who share and generate this resource through bottom-up, decentralised and participatory processes. This regime is expressed in the interplay between designed and emergent modes of governance situated in nested hierarchical systems. That the significance of commons regimes is of importance at this particular historic moment can be discussed at least in three realms.

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(1) See http://www.boell.de/economysocial/economy/economy-commons-10451.html

Firstly, it has been confirmed by numerous studies that 'the tragedy of the commons' is never inevitable and that communities can manage their shared resources in equitable, sufficient and sustainable ways. The commons is increasingly being seen as an effective mechanism for citizen participation and community empowerment. The rise of the commons has also served as a critique of fundamental globalised neoliberal doctrines, which seek to maximise the growth economy, and regard the market as the only appropriate means for generating valuable resources. Secondly, from the perspective of complex adaptive systems, due to its robust, adaptable, and flexible features, a commons mode of governance has been recognised as significant in dealing with changes across a range of scales, from local to global, as it moves towards real world sustainability, through social norms, dynamic institutions and social networks. Thirdly, commons regimes represent a vision of radical transformation, where new modes of production and value practices are introduced that are alternative to the inherent exploitation, repression, alienation, and imperialism within the capitalist system. Through the production of commons, a new era in history is in the making.

Where are we now? In the face of different approaches to the commons, as an academic-activist, I aim to optimise the scope required to develop desirable commons regimes in a complex world. While I aspire to a radical transformation discussed by movement actors as the gateway to systems revolution, I also pay attention to the ways in which commoning activities are portrayed, and whether or not these portrayals match the interests and abilities of commoners. For example, not all commoners focus on social change (Bollier, 2010). There is no reason to expect that all commoners would or should be driven by these values. Values and norms need to be socially constructed and learned, which can hardly be changed overnight. Following Harvey's evolutionary theory, social action initiatives that do seek structural change might be construed as 'too revolutionary' to gain support from institutions whose existence depends on the maintenance of a status quo. This may lead to diverting attention from fundamental social change by softer and more publicly acceptable ones. If 'revolutionary commons regime' is to be truly developed, it must be 'firmly grounded in the reality it seeks to represent', must be 'dialectically formulated', and 'offer real choices for future moments', and hold out the prospect for creating new realities rather than assuming that they will result from the transplantation of new projects into existing systems (Harvey, 1973:151).

This seems to echo Wall's image of the 'amphibian' – "half in the dirty water of the present but seeking to move onto a new, unexplored territory" (2005:178). Similarly, Biel suggests a 'quieter' aspect of revolution, that is, "reformism guided by the radical strategic vision", through a transitional process, to assemble any existing elements that are helpful –"the good sense of many different solutions to a problem, the institutional equivalent to biodiversity in the ecosystem" (Biel, 2011:340). With this understanding, my reflections on commons regimes in a complex world are three-fold.

The first reflection is on the urgent need to encourage a wider scope of collaborative and interdisciplinary research within current studies of commons. The recognition of 'disciplinary maps', only partially within complex systems, has helped promote integrative and synthesised approaches in commons research (Folke, 2007; Ostrom, 2007; Poteete et al., 2010). Significant advantages in commons research related to methodological and disciplinary cross-fertilisation have been documented and recommended. However, challenges of collaborative and interdisciplinary research are fully recognised which can be discussed from at least four aspects. Poteete et al. (2010) have framed 'collaborative research as a collective-action problem' to highlight the

fact that even among commons scholars who advocate the importance of cooperation and collaboration, it is a difficult enterprise to combine multiple methods and disciplines in a programme of research. Four challenges are addressed, including (1) rewards to individual and collaborative research; (2) fragmentation of academia; (3) misunderstanding and mistrust; (4) long-term funding. They argue that it is unlikely to obtain positive research outcomes unless underlying collective-action problems are understood and resolved effectively.

However, in my view, what is most crucial but missing in the literature is to deliberately make efforts to collaborate with people or organisations that hold different world views and political ideologies. This is particularly pertinent in commons research if we are serious about real world sustainability and aim for a better and fuller understanding of the complexity of commons governance. Wider structural problems challenged by anti-capitalists are real and severe and ignoring them would reduce the likelihood of achieving major contributions to human betterment. Anti-capitalists would and should more actively participate in the current commons research community and study the existing large body of research findings to enhance their capacity for commons governance and social change in general. Rather than being thought of as naïve, I argue that this pragmatic approach is helpful in order to advance our vision in developing commons regimes, either on a small scale (i.e. community-based) or a system-wide scale.

I contend that, with intensive knowledge of the possibilities of collective action, the commons research community occupies a strategic role in fostering collaborative innovations to demonstrate a future direction which demands more cooperation than competition and more trust than hostility in unleashing people's full potential in governing resources necessary to humanity. In this sense, Poteete et al. (2010:226)'s theory of collective action centred on the issue of trust is essential – an attitude as well as capacity all commoners need to develop and learn.

The second reflection concerns ways to produce relations among commons regimes, the market and the state. As the quote from the beginning of this section showed, The International Commons Conference held in Berlin in 2010, called upon every commoner to explore "a new framework for the triangular relationships between 'our' commons, the market and the state" and policies to support the idea of the commons. Two observations from this conference are important (Bollier, 2010). The first one relates to the market. While participants were aware of the differences between commons-like economy and the current market economy, they also raised the issue that the desire to secure a purity of the commons does not work. Some argued that it is not self-evident which needs are best fulfilled by markets and which by commons. A second observation relates to the relationships with the state. For example, one commentary highlights the 'virtues of the commons', where all political ideologies can find their resonance. "Conservatives like the idea of responsibility in a commons; liberals are pleased with the focus on equality and basic social entitlement; libertarians like the emphasis on individual initiatives; and leftists like the idea of limiting the scope of the market. Over the long term, the commons has the potential to fundamentally transform society" (Helfrich, 2010, cited in Bollier, 2010:25).

I argue that in order to avoid co-optation by keeping a certain level of autonomy in relation to the market and the state, commoners need to identify themselves as a kind of new social movement. In this context, I find a number of concepts useful in helping commoners understand how they might work better with what they have at hand.

These include Melucci's (1989) idea of formulating a "we" and sustaining it through submerged networks to achieve its "purposive, meaningful…orientation," its "relation between intentions and constraints, possibilities and limits" (Melucci, 1996:386-387); Eyerman and Jamison's (1991) notion of 'ideals' to shift society's 'cosmology' through the creation, articulation and formulation of new thoughts and new knowledge; and Deleuze and Guattari's notion of 'rhizome' characterised by its connection of ideas, issues, events and the 'philosophy of difference'. They write, "A path is always between two points, but the in-between has taken on all the consistency and enjoys both an autonomy and a direction of its own" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988:380). To think 'rhizomically' suggests the inclusion of perspectives and multiple sites of powers and invites us to explore the multiple ways and alternative forms of social interactions, innovation, and becoming: "the creation of space for potential difference" (Scott-Cato and Hillier, 2010:874).

These concepts suggest that those seeking to change need to search not for one solution, but to build multiple, linked strategies and in different sequences, depending on the starting point in any given context. The challenge is to understand what these strategies might be, and how they can be linked to realign three dimensions of the triangle. As Klein (2001) suggests, we need a political framework that encourages the right of diversity – different ways of doing politics. In this regard, all commoners within and among different communities should have a say in how their resources are used – starting from direct democracy on the ground. Only with this kind of foundation can we begin to discuss the wider framework such as a national and an international one. This direct democracy, I argue, can provide a safe distance between the market and the state, and foster civic participation and deliberation to enhance the influence of commons regimes in the process of formulating a sense /concept of "we", developing new ideals and creating spaces for potential difference.

While we actively participate in a softer kind of 'social movement', analagous to an 'amphibian' or 'quieter revolution', I consider it important not to forget our ultimate vision: that of a world 'outside' capitalism. Hence, ***the third reflection*** relates to the actual exercising of new value practices. De Angelis insists that instead of wishing for a mythical 'utopia' at the end of the tunnel, the act of commoning itself represents a set of values within a given community that is outside capital, grounded in everyday practices for the reproduction of livelihoods (De Angelis, 2007:243). He continues:

> *It is through the production of commons that new value practices emerge. The processes of reflection, communication and negotiation aimed at identifying and crafting a specific contingent commons is a philosophy born in struggle, a necessary moment of the production of struggle itself, a philosophy that is grounded, but also aspires, and hence **develops** a strategic look that helps to make clear what is up against…capital **generates** itself **through** enclosures, which subjects in struggle generate themselves **through** commons. Hence 'revolution' is not struggling for commons, but through commons, not for dignity, but through dignity (2007:239, emphasis original).*

Shifting from value systems De Angelis talks about value practices, which refers to "the action, processes, and webs of relations…social practices are not merely about social form, but about the process giving rise to this form" (ibid:29). This 'politics of process' relates to articulations, selection and actualisation based on a system of relations that is alternative to capitalism. Unlike Hardt and Negris' (2000) position that there is nothing

outside capitalism, De Angelis argues for an outside that is alive, lived and crafted in spaces of sharing, conviviality and communality through every single act from our body, connecting different struggles throughout the planet. Thus, the commons discourse empowers anti-capitalists to claim 'the beginning of history' or 'our outside' at present in their every struggle through an alternative, non-capitalist form of social organisation.

These value practices have to be connected to 'praxis': reflection and action, theory and practice directed towards structures that need to be transformed (Friere, 1993:125-6). Praxis consists of performing transformative action while critically reflecting on our role and practice with relation to the action. As Jordan states, "direct action is praxis… and image rolled into one…To engage in direct action you have to feel enough passion to put your values into practice: it is literally embodying your feelings, performing your politics" (Jordan, 1998:133).

Speaking of ideas and value practice, the Diggers movement of 1649 during the English Civil War, which opposed the enclosure of common land, offers an interesting example of commoning. Writing 'earth a common treasury for all' indicates not merely a response to the physical enclosure of the land, but also a rejection of all kinds of enclosure, physically and conceptually (Biel, 2011:323). Howkin points out that Winstanley's ideas about the land, which have been shared by other Diggers communities and followers, spoke not only about 'intellectual tradition' but of a 'popular' one. In addressing the relationship between ideas, political and social practices, Howkin states, "Political ideas do not…exist in a vacuum; they are responses to an era shaped by political and social practices…the ideas created… by the practical concerns of the society in which he lived and by the actions of many who did not share his complex cosmology. There is a dialectical relationship between ideas and action, which shapes all our history" (Howkin, 2002:3).

In Winstanley's words, "yet my mind was not at rest, because nothing was acted, and thoughts run in me that words and writings were all nothing, and must die, for action is the life of all, and if thou dost not act, thou dost nothing". In contemporary times, we have seen real exemplars of catalysts for change in cases from the Global South where commons are still part of people's livelihoods and innovative experiments emerge naturally from people's traditional wisdom and as a survival reflex responding to severe crises. Especially, from the perspective of complex systems, transformative changes often occur at the margins where control is less concentrated and thus freedom to try new things is possible. This is in line with the notion that new force is not at the centre or at the top, but rather 'diffused' throughout the system (Biel, 2011:338). While we have lost some of our culture and knowledge of the past, the essentials still remain and there are new things at hand including learning about how to organise ourselves differently by taking control of our lives and our resources.

These three reflections all point to the fact that we need to engage people at all levels and at different scales in order to optimise the scope of commons regimes in a complex world. For example, how to overcome the cultural differences that separate commons by building a common language and trust within and between movements? Also, how can we find new ways of connecting micro and macro-strategies, using localized activities as learning experiences in empowering people to participate in social transformation at both the micro and macro levels? Undoubtedly there is a lot of work to be done to integrate these various pathways around the central vision of changing the world towards real sustainability. In offering an integrative diagram (Figure 2.1) which

combines three bodies of scholarship (natural/traditional commons; new commons; anti-capitalist perspectives), my aim is not simply to criticise but to search for complementarities to achieve desired governance outcomes.

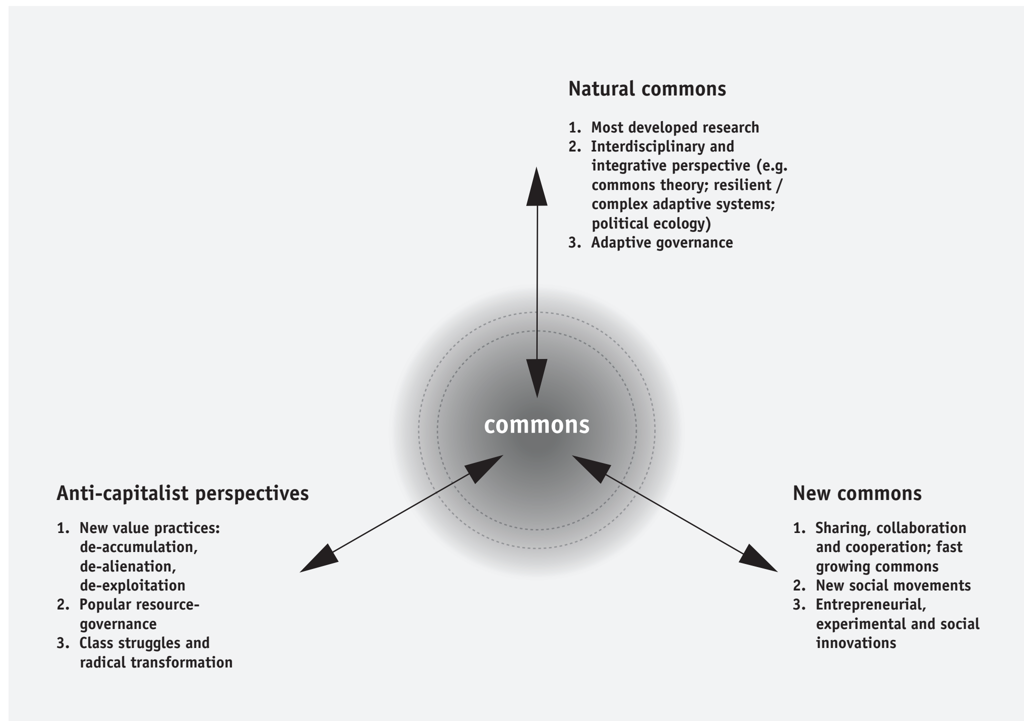

Figure 2.1 Three complementary approaches to commons regimes

At the end of this section in which we discussed the concepts of commons regimes and relevant theories and approaches associated with it, we now have a solid foundation from which to address the implications of shifting food regimes theory to commons regimes and to discuss the meanings of this new concept of "commons food regime". Indeed food, in its broadest sense, has always been the central point in the development of commons throughout history and across different parts of the world. I argue that the active engagement of these two schools of thought is both a form of intellectual innovation and political necessity that underlies a vision of changing the world.

2.4 Constructing an integrative framework for growing a commons food regime

2.4.1 Shifting from food regimes theory to a commons food regime

In the section 'Rethinking food regimes theory', we have seen its evolution over the past 20 years. While I value the interdisciplinary, collaborative and inclusive approach in the analysis of agri-food systems within capitalism on a global scale, nevertheless, as an academic-activist, I find it less useful in providing concrete pathways towards a desirable new food regime. This is a particularly pertinent challenge given that there are myriads of food movements with different priorities and discourses and calls for 'strategic alliances', 'unity of diversity' or 'convergence in diversity'. In responding to this urgent need, rather than only focusing on a 'historic construct' and 'a tool of hindsight' inherent in current food regimes theory, I propose another kind of 'regime': the concept of commons regimes to provide 'a tool of insight' for active engagement in terms of a new regime-formation.

The notion of 'growing a commons food regime' is constructed to shift our focus from a food regimes theory, where a regime is defined as 'capital accumulation' based on French regulation theory and Krasner's international regimes, to commons regimes which indicate the importance of self-determination, self-governance and collective action to envision and achieve a new food regime. A commons food regime is defined as a mode of governance with a mix of institutions (formal and informal rules), interplaying between designed and emergent aspects, dealing with any kind of shared food-related resources by a group of people and/or communities, guided by a set of norms and principles of social justice and ecological integrity. Indeed, agri-food studies and commons regimes are closely related at least in the following five key themes.

The first theme: food is the core theme in commons studies

Food is central to the study of commons, and a large number of commons are related to agri-food sectors. Scholars point to cases around the world where agriculture and agricultural lands, fisheries, grazing lands, water and irrigation, and seeds have been sustained as collectively managed resources by groups of people with various levels of state or market involvement (Hess and Ostrom, 2003:122-123). In fact, many commons problems can be found in governing agri-food resources, for example, dispossession of land is usually seen as one of the most typical enclosures of the commons (e.g. Ostrom, 1990; Mies and Bennholdt-Thornsen, 2001), This is also true in the new commons. Food-related resources seem to cut across all the new commons Hess (2008) has identified. The table below illustrates some selected examples of agri-food related new commons.

Types of new commons	Selected examples of agri-food related commons
1. Culture commons	Folk-ecology, cultural epidemiology and the spirit of the commons (Atran et al., 2002); food and artisan traditions (e.g. slow food) ; commons and local food (Delind, 2006; Delind and Bingen, 2008).
2. Neighbourhood commons	Traditional allotments; Jenney et al. (2007) analyse the incentives for sharing and rule compliance in a Cuban urban commons; gardens become a kind of community action commons – a new kind of against enclosure movement (Rogers, 1995; Assadourian, 2003; Saldivar-Tanaka and Krasny, 2004); building community gardens and neighbourhood commons (Linn, 1999, 2007).
3. Infrastructure commons	Little (2005) examines the issue of public services (telecommunications, electrical power systems, gas and oil, transportation, and water supply systems) as an infrastructure commons with an eye toward sustainability in the context of classic commons dilemmas.
4. Knowledge commons	Shared knowledge practices in agri-food sectors (e.g. alternative food networks); popular/traditional agricultural knowledge (e.g. indigenous knowledge; agroecology, food sovereignty movement); biosafety (Jepson, 2002); Navdanya's seed knowledge as a commons (Shiva, 1993, 1997, 2000, 2009).
5. Medical and health commons	Kapczynski et al. (2005) suggest a system of open licensing to assuage global health inequality; Chandrakanth et al.'s work (2002) on conservation and protection of indigenous medicinal plants; public health and commons (Rai and Boyle, 2007)
6. Market commons	Agri-food sector and gift economy (Bollier, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2012; Handerson, 1991); food bartering; and food coops.
7. Global commons	Biodiversity (Mudiwa, 2002; Gepts, 2004; Berkes, 2007); climate change (Barkin and Shambaugh, 1999; Agarwal et al., 2002; Tietenberg, 2003; Engel and Saleska, 2005); sustainability (Cairns, 2006; Byrne and Glover, 2002); global genetic commons (Scharper and Cunningham, 2007); protecting the environment as a global commons (Boda, 2003, 2006; Anderson and Grewell, 1999, 2001; Warren, 2001; Dodds, 2005, 2008; Uzawa, 2007).

Table 2.3 Agri-food related commons (Source: adapted from Hess, 2008)

The second theme: commons regimes are critical in the reduction of global food crises

Commons regimes play a critical role in the reduction of global food crises. As mentioned in the Introduction, over the last decade evidence has shown that the 'new fundamentals' – including among other things climate change, population growth, and financial speculation – further threaten the twenty-first century food systems (Lang, 2009). Millions of vulnerable people around the world are suffering starvation due to food shortages and increased food price. Food regimes theory provides a sharp analysis of the fundamental changes to global food systems within capitalism. For example, food has become a means of capital accumulation and is subjected to the market rules of supply and demand, although human food requirements are not based on such a mechanism. Also, the production system has become highly oil-dependent for the production of fertilizers, machinery, transportation, and in packaging. Furthermore, homogenised and centralised systems are not resilient to overcoming shocks in complex social-ecological systems. One of the most challenging questions we face is how the current food regime in crisis will be reconstituted (Friedmann and McMichael, 1989; Friedmann, 2005).

Contrary to centralised global industrial agriculture, self-organising commons regimes are critical in resolving current global food crises for at least two reasons. According to Biel (2011), commons-based self-organising food production systems tend to be more robust, adaptable and efficient in terms of low-input physical energy which is substituted by grassroots innovation and experimentation. Human knowledge and creativity can be seen as a kind of free resource. But, as we have seen in earlier sections, this human capacity cannot be fully developed unless an appropriate social system supports reciprocity and mutual benefits between humanity and nature. Despite the variety of techniques and disciplines, all strands of commons-based sustainable agriculture share a general principle – working like and with nature (ibid).

Agroecology, for instance, is one of these strands of sustainable agriculture. In responding to the decline in the quality of the natural resource base that has resulted from the reckless use of non-renewable energy resources in conventional agriculture, agroecology seeks a more holistic approach that emphasizes the interdependence of the different components of agroecosystem (Vandermeer, 1995). In the words of Gliessman (2001:105): "A well-developed, mature natural ecosystem is relatively stable, self-sustaining, recovers from disturbance, adapts to change, and is able to maintain productivity using energy inputs of solar radiation alone" because it maintains the subtle balance between "the complex set of biological, physical, chemical, ecological, and cultural interactions" that obtain in the natural environment.

Since agriculture is understood to be part of a much larger system that includes environmental, economic, and social components (Gliessman, 2001), agroecology not only studies agricultural systems but also the organisation of production and society itself in order to achieve desirable food production in a way that is sustainable but uses less physical inputs (Gliessman, 2006). As Altieri states, "The ultimate goal of agroecological design is to integrate components so that overall biological efficiency is improved, biodiversity is preserved, and the agroecosystem productivity and its self-sustaining capacity are maintained" (Altieri, 2002:4). Diffuse, embodied and local knowledge is essential to agroecology: first, contextual knowledge can enrich our understanding of the existing natural ecosystem structure and secondly, agroecology relies on local farming experiences accumulated from years of living and working within the constraints of a particular place (Gliessman, 2005:109).

Today, the term "agroecology" refers not only to a sustainable agricultural practice, but also a political or social movement (Wezel et al., 2009). In effect, the food sovereignty movement is a key advocate for the advancement of agroecology, which moves towards a commons-based food system, where societies, communities and people obtain autonomy allowing them to take control of the entire food system, including natural resources such as seeds, soil, land and water as well as other resources such as knowledge, language, cultural and spiritual heritages. Support for this view comes from Pretty (2002), who argues that food is a commons instead of commodity, and is crucially significant to sustainable agriculture. He urges an urgent agricultural 'revolution', not merely in food and agriculture systems but in our common heritage between people and nature.

> *These seek to build up relations of trust, reciprocal mechanisms, common norms and rules, and new forms of connectedness, thus helping in the development and spread of a greater literacy about the land and nature. Great progress on developing new commons is being made through the actions of hundreds of thousands of groups.*

> *Ultimately…large-scale transformations of land and community can only occur if we cross the frontiers (Pretty, 2002:169).*

Secondly, since food systems are located in complex social-ecological circumstances, multi-level governance is needed to facilitate learning and adaptation, connecting to community-based management with regional or national governance and management systems, encouraging the sharing of knowledge and information, and promoting collaboration and dialogue around goals and outcomes (Armitage, 2008:7). Specifically, Stiglitz (2002) argues that the success of sustainable development depends decisively on the equal distribution of political power among social groups and widespread public participation. Scholars assert that democracy provides the best chance of achieving sustainability (Morrison, 1995; Prugh et al., 2000).

The term 'food democracy' was coined by Lang to refer to "the demand for greater access and collective benefits from the food system" (1999:218) and "the long process of striving for improvements in food for all, not just the few" (2007:12). Food democracy is based on the principle that citizens have rights, responsibility and power to participate and determine decisions concerning their food system at various levels. This process transforms individuals from 'passive consumers into active, educated citizens' to ensure all citizens have access to affordable, healthy and culturally appropriate foods. Food democracy emphasizes social justice in the food system, and food is viewed as a locus of the democratic process. As Hassanein notes, food democracy can be seen as a 'method' to pragmatically move toward sustainability of agri-food systems. It is of particular use when values and interests are in conflict during the decision making processes, and the consequences of decisions are uncertain (Hassanein, 2003:83). A commons regime can arguably broaden the concept of food democracy as a process in which institutional arrangements and ecological knowledge are tested and revised in a dynamic, self-organising process of learning-by-doing (Folke et al., 2005; Olsson et al., 2004). Above all, according to Dahlberg, what is essential for everyone is "to start thinking about how food system transformation should inform our acting democratically as citizens at the same time that we are thinking how democratic transformation should inform our acting as food system citizens" (2001:146).

The third theme: broadening the scope of food governance

The third theme relates to the notion of food governance. Food democracy has further implications for the notion of food governance. Current food governance in theory and practice predominantly focuses on how public food policy is carried out in three major modes of governance, including an interactive process between state and the public with private interests and actors who can be corporate led or have emerged from civil society (Lang et al., 2009:181). Public policy reflects multi-level governance structures ranging from the local, regional, national and international. Examples of different combinations of governance modes illustrate negotiation, cooperation, conflict and tensions, leading to strategic policy choices, by states, other participants and network actors. The governance of alternative food networks (Higgins et al., 2008a; Goodman et al., 2012), in spite of being embedded in the mainstream market, attempts to challenge the dominant food system through, for example, certification, which is in the process of building markets for their produce outside conventional supply chains (Higgins et al., 2008a,b) or organic agriculture – providing new forms of participation around food which involves close alliances between producers and consumers who are working to implement a localised food system (Reed, 2009).

However, unlike this kind of food governance focusing on formal public policy, a commons food regime aims to broaden the notion of food governance to include informal 'rules' (e.g. unwritten form) and 'policy' (e.g. written form) in terms of food-related resource governance. Questions such as the scope of governance and types of resources are decided by the given groups of people and/or communities. The adoption of the view that food governance can go beyond public policy arenas also implies a more flexible understanding of multi-level governance, ranging from household, a neighbourhood, a city, to much more complex networks of communities, even reaching a global scale. In addition, it is clear but also worthy of explicit explanation, that a food-related shared resource governance system (i.e. a commons food regime) must be seen as combinations of resources.

I need to emphasise that by no means does this approach depoliticise food governance. On the contrary, it aims to enlarge the scope of food governance to the point where everyone (both expert and lay people, women and men) has the right to participate in the process of decision-making in food-related resources governance, however modest or trivial a given issue or project might look. I would argue this is the basis of our learning to work collectively and collaboratively towards a shared vision and/or common frontiers. Resource governance and management is a political process and the implementation of all 'policies' and decisions is, to a certain extent, an experiment. Strategic alliances for either food or commons movement do not evolve of themselves. Instead, they have to be consciously organised, re-organised and learned and re-learned, through ongoing communication, deliberation, negotiation and contestation within and among communities at various levels and geographies.

The fourth theme: sustainability is a shared concern

The fourth connection relates to sustainability, which is a crucial concept and a shared concern in both food and commons regimes. In terms of restructuring the current food regime, among different frameworks, Blay-Palmer and Koc's (2010) 'sustainable food systems lens' provides a 'holistic vision of sustainability' with ideas and pathways for practitioners, academics, policy-makers and citizens to rethink, work and challenge the existing food regime in crisis. Although any framework is a work in progress, it is still useful to take sustainable food systems as a base "to understand and transform commodity-based food systems in sustainable food webs that are more equitable, just, resilient, inclusive and regenerative" (ibid:224).

Incorporating key concepts such as food democracy, food sovereignty and public ethic of care, the framework (see Figure 2.2) consists of: (1) structural dimensions drawn on insights from food regimes theory; (2) a broader policy context; and (3) characteristics of socio-communal, economic and environmental spaces with guiding principles, practices and institutions that facilitate the realisation of sustainable food systems. A number of cautions are highlighted with regard to the use of this framework. First, there are trade-offs in practice among different values and priorities. Second, the issue of appropriate scale and boundaries is important when dealing with a food 'system', which at times might lead us to lose the details. Third, terms and agendas should not be appropriated by special interests. Fourth, technology is not the only solution. Fifth, we need to be attentive to power imbalances in the process towards sustainable food systems. Finally, the significance of context is never under-emphasised and a descriptive blueprint should be avoided. With its specific attention to communities on a multiple scale and within a telescopic perspective, a 'sustainable food systems' framework aims to

consider the dynamic relationships between changes on the ground and shifts in broader systemic changes at a global level. This framework also warns us not to fall into a trap we might face – either the root causes or immediate crises as every change large or small, counts in creating a critical mass for restructuring the current food regime (ibid:231-232; 243).

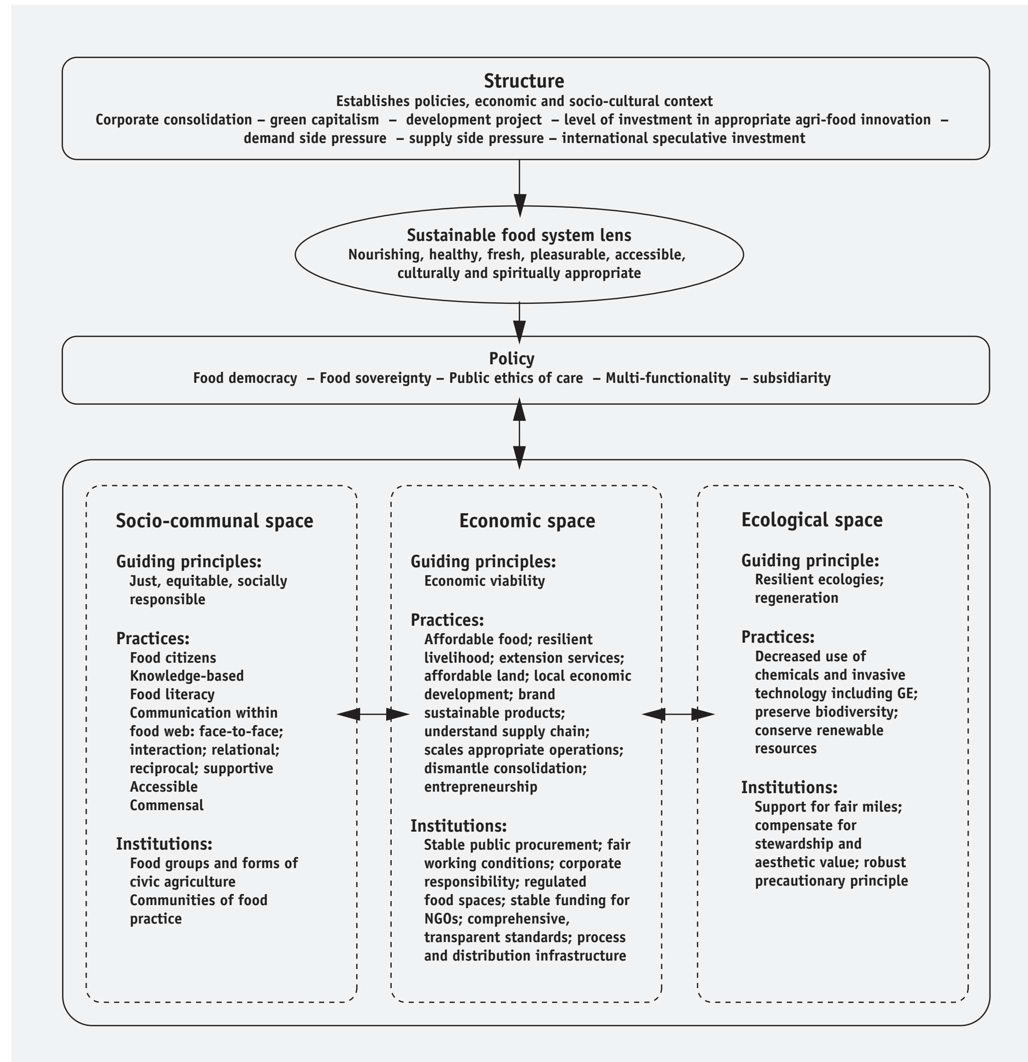

Figure 2.2 Sustainable food systems lens (Source: Blay-Palmer and Koc's, 2010:225)

With regard to commons regimes, Ostrom (2009) also develops a general framework for analysing the sustainability of social-ecological systems. Traditionally, commons research relied on standard case studies, based on field observation and archival studies, but this has now been broadened to methods such as laboratory experiments and agent-based modelling to deal with large numbers of data sets (Poteete et al., 2010). By using multiple research methods, individuals can work with others to manage shared resources for a long period of time. However, this is a context-specific situation which is influenced by a variety of conditions (Agrawal, 2007; Ostrom, 2007). In finding a balance between what is useful and not being overwhelmed by its complexity, the development of an ontological framework along with diagnostic theories is used to enable scholars to understand causal processes within a complex, nested system. The key point in this approach is to think about which of the attributes of a system are likely to have major impacts on the patterns of interactions and outcomes to be understood. No focal system is appropriate for all questions and a set of variables may be changed in

the course of a research project. Figure 2.3 provides an overview of the framework for analysing the sustainability of natural resources, showing the relationships among four first-level core subsystems of a social-ecological system that affect each other as well as linked social, economic, and political settings and related ecosystems. The subsystems are (1) resource systems; (2) resource units; (3) governance systems; and (4) users. Each core subsystem consists of multiple second-level variables, which are further composed of deeper-level variables.

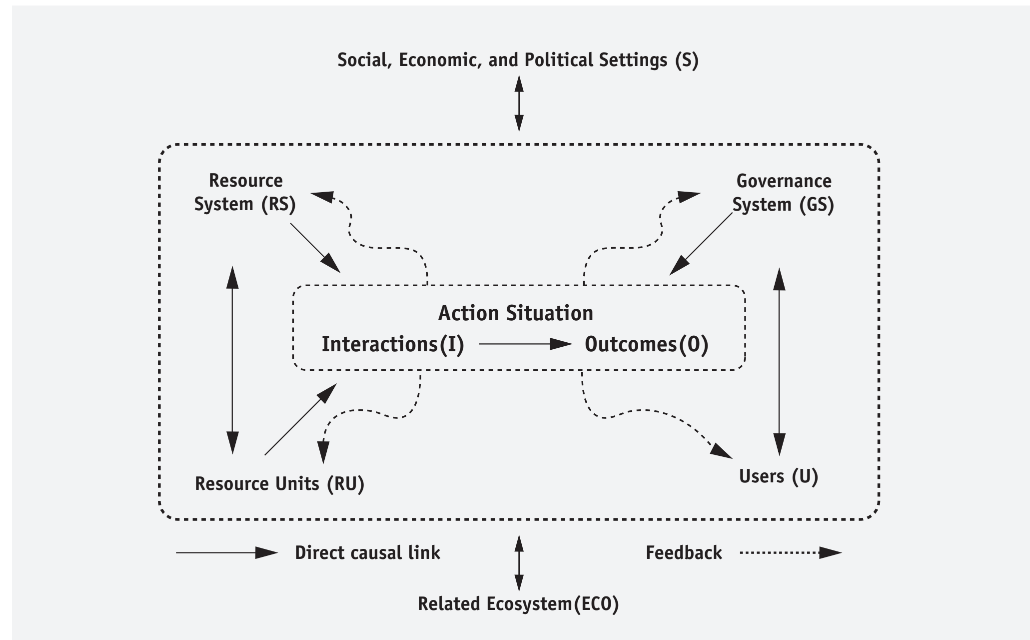

Figure 2.3 First tier of analysing sustainability of social-ecological systems (Source: Ostrom, 2010:235)

The fifth theme: naming and framing

As Friedmann (2005, 2009) suggests, there are multiple pathways in thinking of food regime transitions where both namimg and framing a 'new' food regime constitute an important part of our understanding of political economy in agri-food systems at a global level. For example, 'food from nowhere regime' versus 'food from somewhere regime' (Campbell, 2009) is one such attempt. Indeed, in agri-food studies, framing an issue can have a profound impact on food movements. For example, while Mann's (2009) work highlights how food sovereignty movements apply strategic framing to communicate the rights of global peasants and those dispossessed from the land, Fairbairn (2008, 2012) raises critical concern about whether this very framing approach may not be effective in fulfilling its potential to address social injustice in the US context. A shift from food regimes theory to focus on a commons food regime suggests another strategic framing. As part of a broader network, a commons food regime is created to build alliances and actively works towards reframing both the image and content of a new food regime within the current capitalist political economy. Framing, as a strand of social movement theories, can help organise and guide – intellectually, emotionally, and politically – both individual and collective actions (McAdam et al., 1996; Benford and Snow, 2000; Oliver and Johnston, 2005). In Gitlin's words, "frames are the principles of selection, emphasis, and presentation composed of tacit little theories about what exists, what happens and what matters" (Gitlin, 1980:6-7). New values have to be "planted and nurtured, old meanings or understandings jettisoned, and erroneous beliefs… reframed in order to garner support and secure participation" (Snow et al., 1986:473).

It is widely accepted that adopting a commons vocabulary has a 'positive connotation' (Hess, 2008). It combines both old and new struggles and possibilities (Caffentzis, 2010). It also offers a "coherent alternative model for bringing economic, social, and ethical concerns into greater alignment", as well as helping us to build more culturally satisfying 'mental maps' for social consensus towards real world sustainability as a whole (Bollier, 2007:29). This commons discourse also echoes two key concepts identified by Friedmann: democracy at all scales and the implied rethinking of the meaning of public (Friedmann, 2005:259). In Lasch's words, "self-governing communities, not individuals, are the basic units of democratic life" (Lasch, 1995:8).

In short, comparing food regimes theory and a commons food regime, three distinctive differences can be identified. First, while the former is a historic construct referring to regime as accumulation at a global scale, the latter is flexible in size, scale and boundary, depending on the given community involved and their connections with the rest of the world; these could be with a regime at a local level, but a widely networked translocal/transnational regime is also possible. Second, while the former is 'a tool of hindsight', helping us understand the formal and informal (explicit and implicit) 'rules' and 'institutions' in the development of a global food system within capitalism, the latter is 'a tool of insight', aiming to move from a passive to active role in the transformation of our food regime in crisis, based on self-determination and collective actions for an appropriate governance system. Third, a commons food regime broadens the scope of food governance that is beyond current theory and practice, which in addition to food policy, aims at the inclusion of any kind of food-related resource governance.

It is important to recognise that commoning practice does not automatically operate as an ideal state, capable of achieving any common good and public interest; rather, a commons food regime is a socially constructed sphere governing our collective relationships with food. Harvey notes, "Questions of the commons are contradictory and therefore always contested. Behind these contradictions lie conflicting social interests" (Harvey, 2011:102). However, while acknowledging that "commons acquire many forms, and they often emerge out of struggles against their negation" (2003:7), and that any experiment within the current political economy is bound to be partial, fragile, uncertain and contingent, De Angelis makes the encouraging point that "it is through production of commons that new values practices emerge" (2007:239). This insight gets me to think more creatively. If we consider each food regime as a seed of change, what if we sow millions of such seeds and nurture them with care, could we not arrive at a new forest? If this kind of thinking is allowed, then we need to explore the idea of care and its associated values in more detail.

2.4.2 Care is the core of growing a commons food regime

From the outset, I have given myself a double identity between academia and activism as well as theory and practice (by shifting from a passive concept to active engagement), exploring the patterning of intersections across this pair of two-way relationships. Similarly, the concept of a commons food regime itself is a rich combination of two areas of research, namely, a food regimes theory and commons regimes. It also goes further, by including cross-cutting themes such as complex adaptive systems, social movement theories, political ecology, an actant network theory and food studies in general. With existing strands of thoughts, we can sketch out a myriad of pictures of what a commons food regime may look like or mean to different people. Such an

approach would run against the grain of this project which, at its heart, is concerned with a specific kind of new food regime, one based on the basic principles of ecological integrity and social justice. As Walls (2011) insists, a regime must function

> *as a means to an end, so the idea of an output in the form of a resource may still help to focus our minds on the desirable features of that end-product. Without this concluding step, it becomes more difficult to argue the case for better or worse outcomes, or relate regimes to the outputs they tend to generate (p.36).*

However, what is the foundation to ensure that such basic principles are being embedded in the process of regime-formation? At issue here is a common challenge of finding a core – 'a unity of diversity' and/or 'convergence in diversity' in order to create synergistic outcomes in a world held together by an array of disciplines, organisations, institutions, movements, and forms of discursive power, and at a multitude of sites across the social domain. In this section, I want to propose that care is the core of growing a commons food regime, as 'care' represents an 'attitude' and 'orientation' – a way of relating, on the one hand, to other associated values (Tronto, 1994, 1999; Staeheli and Brown, 2003; Gleeson and Kearns, 2001; Haylett, 2003), and on the other hand, a recognition of our intersubjectivity as "the essential, primary and fundamental structure of subjectivity" (Levinas, 1985:95).

In recent years, 'care' has been found to be a useful concept in many disciplines, addressing a wide range of dimensions and practices of care, which are not only aimed at academic audiences but also 'real world' readers (Popke, 2006). However, even with this popularity, there appears to be no consensus with regard to the meaning of care. As Morse et al. (1990:2) state, it is clear, from the literature about the idea of care so far, that "there is no consensus regarding the definitions of caring, the components of care, or the process of care". This view can be supported by scholars of 'ethical foodscapes', who remind us of different sorts of moral complications in our vision of care (Probyn, 2000; Guthman, 2003; Goodman, et al., 2010).

Indeed, probing into the ethical foodscapes, Goodman et al. (2010:1792-1793) suggest four future research areas: first, an investigation of the 'conventionalisation of ethics' in food as well as in other modes of provision and consumption in our contemporary world; second, a deeper understanding of unequal distribution of power relations inherent in alternative food networks; third, identifying projects 'outside' dominant neoliberal logic and subjectivity; and finally, we must ask ourselves how we can expand or deepen the work of ethical foodscapes spatially. These observations have an important implication for our discussion over the relationship between care and a commons food regime. Since I am fully aware that any such discourses of 'care' can be readily appropriated and captured by different agencies whose practices may bear little resemblance to our ideal, it is first necessary to establish what kind of 'care' we refer to. Here, I want to start with what Morgan (2010) describes as 'politics of care', which has been identified as one of the key policy levers in the framework of sustainable food systems (Blay-Palmer, 2010).

Acknowledging the limitations of ethical consumerism as being enough to address the challenge of the threat from climate change, Morgan suggests we consider the potential to challenge the current unsustainable food system through a more progressive food policy, a new politics of care. In his view, this new politics of care exhibits two defining characteristics: first, they operate in the public instead of private realm and second,

they are practised both locally and globally, a 'telescoping perspective' that aims to reduce the tension of geographical divides and the marginalisation of certain voices and communities. Morgan's work has investigated the question of why and how we shall care for others along a range of scales and contexts. Such an inclusive approach echoes Smith's assessment, in which he states that anyone who promotes the idea of care, "need[s] to consider how to spin their web of relationships widely enough that some people are not beyond its reach" (Smith, 2000:97). Morgan also seeks to bring the complexity and multi-dimensional view of politics of care to the emergent global governance regimes, such as the vision of food sovereignty as well as other development projects, including the Kyoto 2 protocol in terms of green-gap emission and pro-poor trade regulation. Politics of care, in this sense, has implications for how we view traditional notions of democracy and citizenship. Through conscious and constant negotiation and deliberation, it can also be used as a vehicle to mobilise more political resources and collective obligations to counter the devastation caused by climate change in the world we are facing now.

In recent geographical scholarship, there has been a renewed interest in applying the concept of 'care' empirically through studying people's own perceptions, thinking about and understanding our food situations. Dowler et al. (2010) sought to investigate how diverse understandings of reconnecting our biological and social relationships are revealed through care for food. In this three-year study, they worked with six different food enterprises and schemes – ranging from producers as consumers (e.g. community gardens, allotment); producer-consumer partnerships (e.g. community supported agriculture schemes) and direct sell (e.g. farm shops, farmers' markets and box schemes) – all with a direct relationship between producers and consumers. In their findings, reconnection is a revealing feature which is mediated by a host of related participants (e.g. family members, friends and peers, colleagues and social networks), materials (e.g. soil, plants, animals, etc.) and social institutions (e.g. markets, local authorities).

More importantly, discourses and practices of reconnection were expressed through at least three aspects: first, 'biological' in food – seasonality, vernacular and sensual realities; second, social connections in terms of authenticity, integrity and trust, a sense of community and simply personal pleasure and fun; and third, moral connections, with some evidence of 'graduation effect' – a 'becoming' process, rather than there being an initial immediate motivation for their involvements in these food enterprises or schemes, and a tendency that only few study participants were active in trying to influence others outside their small personal circles. These authors show the potential in thinking about 'reconnection' through the concept of care, both for humans and non-humans, which functions on a variety of spatial and temporal scales.

Three defining themes were identified in their 'care-full' motivations articulated by those producers and consumers: care for local economies, environment and future generation; care for health and wholeness; and care about transparency and integrity in food systems, including matters of science and governance (ibid:212). The study of this complex geography of care sites bring up two notable points. First, care for food contributes to expression of identity and culture, a way of demonstrating people's 'ethical values' in their social practices. Such practices are not limited by what Morgan terms as proximity principles of 'nearest and dearest' (2010:1860), but on the contrary, at multi-levels and multi-scales. Second, both producers and consumers should thus be viewed as "nuanced economic and social agents, who may know some things and who have an aptitude for learning more, and who are well able to articulate and practise

the complexities of sourcing and using food" (Dowler et al., 2010:217). In addition, although not specifically addressed in their study in detail, it is worth mentioning that this relationship – human and non-humans, especially, humans-animals – has gained growing attention in the past two decades in social sciences and humanities (Kalof and Fitzgerald, 2007; D'Silva and Webster, 2010) for issues of how animals are cared for and mistreated by humans and the impacts of animal farming on the environment, animal welfare and ethical and spiritual perspectives towards animal food, particularly referring to vegetarianism and/or veganism (Morris and Kirwan, 2006; Bailey, 2007; Fox and Ward, 2008).

A similar concept to this 'care-full' motivation in alternative food system is revealed in the permaculture design principles. Originating from a number of disciplines such as organic farming, agroforestry, integrated farming, sustainable development and applied ecology, permaculture incorporates ecological design and ecological engineering to develop sustainable human settlements and self-maintained agricultural systems derived from natural ecosystems. Permaculture design emphasizes patterns of landscape, function, and species assemblies. The principal concept of permaculture is maximizing useful connections between components and synergy of the final design. The focus of permaculture is not on each separate element, but rather on the relationships created between elements by the way they are put together. Further to our discussion over care, it is worth mentioning that the three core tenets of permaculture include: firstly, taking care of the earth as, without a healthy earth, humans cannot survive and flourish; secondly, taking care of the people to enable them to have access to those resources necessary for their existence, and thirdly, sharing the surplus to ensure healthy, natural and human systems (Mollison, 1988; Mars, 2005).

Indeed, behind all these relations in terms of care for food lies a complex web of meaning. The meaning of food, or more specifically, the meaning of care for food in our lives, has been a persistent subject in anthropology and sociology. Food, in Barthes's view, is a signifier, "a real sign… the functional unit of a system of communication… for all food serves as a sign among the members of a given society" (1997:21). Similarly, M.F.K. Fisher, one of the most famous food writers, also expresses a holistic appreciation for food. In *The Gastronomical Me*, Fisher states, "It seems to me that our three basic needs, for food and security and love, are so mixed and mingled and entwined that we cannot straightly think of one without the others…it is all one…There is a communion of more than our bodies when bread is broken and wine drunk" (Fisher, 1983, cited in Counihan and Esterik, 1997:vii). Another similar sentiment has been put forward by the poet Neruda. In his poem, *Justice of eating* (cited in Heynen, 2005), where he wonders when we can "sit down to eat with all those who haven't eaten…put salt in the lakes of world…and a plate like the moon itself from which we can all eat"? Once again, this is a call for a new form and articulation of food justice through our care for food, much beyond ethical consumption (Buller, 2010). Indeed, food can be understood as a powerful metaphor for care (Kaplan, 2000); an instrument of social solidarity (e.g. Levi-Strauss, 1997); "food is life, and life can be studied and understood through food" (Counihan and Van Esterik, 1997:1), and food can reflect the social, psychological and emotional well-being of the family and its cultural and economic background, and above all, affirmation of a sense of "peoplehood and our place in history" (Steinberg, 1998:296). As Kaplan (2000) rightly points out, by exploring the social and symbolic perspectives of food, we can begin to grasp the multidimensional and complex dynamics of food and caring.

Taken together, the work discussed here illustrates the value of care in various dimensions that might be considered subject to ethical, political, biological, social and cultural judgement, and touching slightly upon the economic aspect. But these perspectives provide only part of the answer as to why care is the core to a commons food regime. Since food is the foundation of all economies, unsurprisingly, another compelling argument for care comes precisely from an alternative economic system to the current capitalist economy – a caring economy, which deserves our better attention. A caring economy is not an end product, but a different orientation and a developmental process. Much of this work is inspired by a series of feminist advancements in the development of economic theory and the prospects for caring. Himmelweit (2007), for example, shows that care is the development of a relationship, with an unequal distribution of caring responsibility and caring needs, as well as the impacts from social norms at different localities and societies. Through analysis of the evolution in labour markets and movements within and between the paid and unpaid economies, she argues that rather than be left to market forces, public policy should play an important role in preventing an uncaring future, as policy intervention not only can and should reflect the social norms and practices of a society, it can also facilitate changes in those norms and practices at the same time. While this perspective is quite relevant to the politics of care and thus should not be ignored, I want to introduce here a different concept of the caring economy – one that is commons-based. Rather than attempt a thorough review, I want to highlight two selected works that are particularly important to a commons food regime.

We can begin with Mies and Bennholdt-Thomsen's 'subsistence perspective', in which they insist, "there cannot only be no commons without community, but also no commons without economy…hence, reinventing the commons is linked to the re-invention of the communal or commons-linked economy" (Mies and Bennholdt, 2001:1021). The proposed alternative vision to global capitalist economies comes through prioritising ordinary people's capacity for self-sufficiency and self-reliance, living quasi-premodern, peasant-like, small-scaled, decentralised and regionalised communities. They reject top-down decision-making, or the 'men's house politics' of Athenian 'democracy' – limited to a small group of elites – and applaud the collective, inclusive and consensus-building form of politics, which they term 'taro field politics', with the first principle that politics is not separated from people's everyday practices and everyone is empowered through practising their politics (Mies and Bennholdt, 1999:207-212).

> *Empowerment can only be found in ourselves and in our cooperation with nature within and around us. This power does not come from dead economy. It lies in mutuality and not in competition, in doing things ourselves and not in only passively consuming. It lies in generosity and the joy of working together and not in individualistic self-interest and jealousy. This power also lies in our recognition that all creatures on earth are our relatives (Mies and Bennholdt-Thomsen, 1999:5).*

At the heart of the subsistence perspective lies the control of our food and we must defend all the resources and means for food production from being enclosed and/or destroyed. This means any resources essential to people's life should be protected and controlled by the people of a village, a tribe and the communities. Resources include natural resources such as land, water, biodiversity, but also their culture and language. Strong connections are evident between their subsistence and commons, all linked within living communities. Unlike the Western conception of rights focusing only on individuals

or the nation-state, the rights and sense of democracy that people hold on to are communal democracy and customary communal rights. However, they also recognise the fact that these communal rights do not exist per se. It requires huge efforts in terms of raising people's awareness through different kinds of social movements, mostly at the parish level, and concerted coordination and support between different groups to create synergy to defend their autonomy, values and beliefs. Thus, they insist, "no subsistence without resistance and no resistance without subsistence" (ibid:213).

The second example discusses Navdanya's journey of promoting seed as commons. Navdanya means 'nine seeds' or 'new gift' – symbolising protection of biological and cultural diversity. Founded by Vandana Shiva in 1984, Navdanya is a seed saving programme made up of a network of seed-keepers and organic producers across sixteen states in India. Starting as a social movement, Navdanya has challenged the disastrous results of the Green Revolution, globalisation, trade liberisation, and policies which legitimise exclusive ownership of life forms and control intellectual property for commercial purposes[1].

Underpinning Navdanya is the Gandhian ideal of *swaraj*, translated as capacity for self-rule, self-heal, and self-realisation – both individually and collectively – grown from within, from the strengths, perspectives, wisdom and experiences of caring for people, communities and nature (The Swaraj Foundation[2]). This self-organisation and self-healing characteristic of a living organism is of particular importance for our earth ecosystem to adapt, to learn and to rebuild itself. Through the process of governing commons, it has stimulated active citizen participation, has rejuvenated people's relationship with nature and the ecosystem, and fostered collaborative innovation. In this way the movement bolsters the capacity of individuals and communities to shape changes to institutions, policies, and practices in order to transform the unsustainable food system. From an ancient Indian culture, all living things count, whether fish in the oceans, trees in the forest and earthworms in the soil. Shiva proposes an idea of earth democracy based on old Indian wisdom:

> *The universe is the creation of the supreme power meant for the benefit of all creation; each individual life form must therefore learn to enjoy its benefits by forming a part of the system in close relationship with other species. Let not any one species encroach upon others' rights (Shiva, 2010:95).*

Most importantly, Shiva asserts, we should explore ways to live at peace with nature. At the Earth University, a university of the seed, people come together to learn how to build a new kind of freedom for the whole of humanity with the help of 'living economies', "which concern human creativity, and mimic nature's diversity, self-organisation, and complexity…every community is its own centre. Connected to others in mutuality and support" (2005:72). Such a vision of 'living economies' cannot be achieved without a holistic understanding of the spirit of care and caring. In that, she insists,

> *Freedom, sustainability, justice, and peace have become inseparable from each other. You can't work for any of them partially; they all come together. An economic system that is a system of peace also creates a just system. A system that is just, which allows people to have their share of the resources of the earth, is a system that would be sustainable. And a system that is sustainable will be a system that will be based on freedom of the people, freedom of the earth, freedom of the species (ibid:94).*

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(1) See http://www.navdanya.org/
(2) See http://www.swaraj.org/

In practice, on a broader scale, similar arguments can be found in other strands of ecofeminism, such as 'eco-sufficiency' (Salleh, 2010), feminist ecoregionalism (Cochrane, 2007), and ecofeminism and ecosocialism (Brownhill et al., 2010), dealing with alternative models or perspectives to the current globalised neoliberal economies. There are internal critiques among ecofeminist scholars themselves. Issues about the renaissance of tradition and the embracing influences of modernity, material, political and economic inequality, and the tensions between local and global are all heatedly debated. In spite of different focuses and priorities, what they all share in common are two things: first, their commitment of care for people and society inclusively, and in harmony with our relationships to nature; and second, their commitment to 'praxis' by actually working out concrete exemplars and pragmatic experiments, whether through viable local economies, participating in real politics, organising movements and challenging any kind of dominance and exploitation (Gaard, 2010:659). These internal debates among ecofeminist scholars represent a more living and healthier environment for any kind of scholarship. It is by no means a coincidence that ecofeminism occupied such an important and strategic position. As mentioned earlier, Brownhill et al. (2012) points out that women's strategic position in the global anti-capitalist movement is grounded in women's crucial responsibility for and stewardship over aspects of fertility that are preconditions of capitalist accumulation and social control. A similar argument is made by Lloyd with regard to fostering an ethic of care. A feminist perspective of care, he states, should "be understood as an attempt to develop a new moral epistemology, which breaks with the rules of liberal political philosophy and offers a new conceptualisation of ethics, justice and autonomy" (Lloyd, 2004:247).

So far, I have written about the concept of care predominantly from an autonomous perspective at various scales and levels, ranging from an articulation of self-interest (e.g. Adam Smith), to relational autonomy (e.g. Tronto, 2003 in Diedrich et al., 2003; MacKenzie and Stoliar, 2000), and to communal and collective interdependence for a caring economy based on self-provision and self-sufficiency (e.g. ecofeminism approach). Like the 'ethical complex' (Friedberg, 2004), the 'caring complex' is never a simple case of black and white, but has many shades of grey as well as complex implications and complications, ranging from our own body to other bodies, life (e.g. animals, plants, and soil, etc.), society (in all kinds of forms and social organisations), to the broadest scope like nature and ecology. Yet when we discuss care, it is hard to neglect the Franco-Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas – one of the most important thinkers of the 20th century – who is best known for his establishment of a heteronomous ethics, an ethics built not upon the self, but the other (Simmons, 1999).

> *What I want to emphasise is that the human breaks with pure being, which is always a persistence in being. This is my principle thesis…with the appearance of the human – and this is my entire philosophy – there is something more important than my life, and that is the life of others (Levinas et al., 1988:172).*

The purpose in introducing Levinas's care ethic perspective is not to pursue a greater philosophical depth in this thesis, but that it is worthy of deeper exploration in the future. It is, rather, a set of applications of Levinan's philosophy that I find useful to illuminate the significance of care to a commons food regime. There are three applications in Levinas's philosophy that I found noteworthy about this investigation.

First and foremost, contrary to other commentaries challenging the proximity principle of care, at the core of Levinas's philosophy, it is clear that the notion of relationship with

the other must be conceived in terms of proximity, that is, before the presence of another 'face', a face-to-face encounter with another human being. We should be aware of the role of the body as an interface to experience the other. The face, in particular, Levinas says, "is a living, naked presence; it is expression" (1969:66). A face before us is a living reminder calling for care and respect for that person, to take care of another human person. The face has a unique authority over me, which provides a possibility to disobey our ordinary structures of being – seeking self-preservation on which most western philosophy has been based.

Second, in parallel to this proximity, is the notion of the asymmetry of the ethical relationship, the non-reciprocal relation of responsibility – being called by another and responding to that other. As Colliere (1982, cited in Lavoie et al., 2006:231) puts it, "care does make sense and has value only if it takes into account what is precious for people, what has meaning for them or contributes to give meaning again to their life". Surely it is hard to accept such a strong assertion, a one-way connection, implying a rare moral obligation, especially in a society which normally promotes equality and egalitarianism as a virtue. In this asymmetrical relationship, Levinas encourages us to submit ourselves to learn from others, "the content of the other's instructions is ethical; it is a call to learn through action, through a response" (Diedrich et al., 2003). This response must be concrete, infinite and asymmetrical generosity as we are called to respond to another incarnate being; it can be so extreme, according to Levinas, that the ego must be capable of 'giving the bread out of his mouth, or giving his skin" (1981:77). He insists on "the significance of compassion at the very heart of care, this 'event of love', this typically human possibility that consists in 'suffering for' others, to share in the suffering of the other" (Lavoie et al., 2006:230).

Third, Levinas expands his care ethics, originally based on face-to-face human relations, to the realm of politics, which is made up of many impersonal organisations and institutions. Levinas's care ethics (or care perspective) can be regarded as a radical response to ancient Greek philosophy of justice, grounded on an autonomy-based ethics of justice (Diedrich et al., 2003). Simmons (1999) argues that far from being apolitical as some have thought, Levinas's philosophy starts and ends in politics, which fundamentally changes the nature of politics and primarily on a metaphysical level, "as prima philosophia' (Levinas and Kearney, 1986:29). Contrary to Hobbes's argument that politics could lead to ethics, "politics must be controlled by ethics: the other concerns me" (Levinas and Rotzer, 1995:59). For Levinas, "Politics does not subsume ethics, but rather it serves ethics. Politics is necessary but it must be continually checked by ethics" (1999:98), Simmons asserts. This political thought has a specific implication that it cannot support a liberal freedom, an egoistic freedom (or freedom of the individual being), but to support the freedom of ethics where civic duty and active cultivation of responsibility are the key constituencies (Diedrich et al., 2003). If Plato's model of the best 'king' is the one who is best in control of himself, Levinas envisions the one who is in ethical relationship with the other (Simmons, 1999:99). In this regard, in order to keep politics checked by ethics, there is a need to call for a 'permanent revolution' (ibid), trying to be most just in whatever and wherever possible, "a rebellion that begins where the other society is satisfied to leave off, a rebellion against injustice that begins once order begins" (Levinas, 1989:242).

All things considered, Levinas sets a very high bar for care ethics, perhaps demanding too much as many commentators suggest. However, I find his radical perspective insightful to a commons food regime. First, his principle of proximity reminds us of

being an ever watchful-eye alert to our surroundings and responsible for both the people and events around us. While I largely agree with many authors' arguments that we should broaden our scope of care beyond the 'nearest and dearest', I would add that, in reality, those who are next to us, like our neighbours, are those people we know the least. This is particularly true in an urbanised world where people are less connected to their localities. Care for our local communities and food-related resources around us, though not exclusive, serves as a point of departure to grow a commons food regime.

Second, the asymmetrical relationships in terms of moral obligations towards the other, suggests to us that caring practices are not necessarily self-evident ways to behave but a difficult task which requires solid motivations and ongoing learning. Perhaps we will never be able to give our bread out of our mouth to the other, but at least, we are able to share a meal, in its simplest but sincere spirit. The good thing that Levinas shows us is that we do have this capacity to learn to care, not only through abstract thinking and reasoning, but more through bodily engagement – "care is a love that I cultivate only with labour" (Diedrich et al., 2003:57). Indeed, growing a commons food regime is a vision and process, more specifically, a learning process to help us build our capacity, individually and collectively, to practise caring and associated values through the production of commons.

Third, Levinas's metaphysical thoughts on the relationship between ethics bring us back to the centre of the commons: ordinary people living ordinary lives and coming together to co-operate in governing shared resources, whose very existence, views, discoveries should be taken into account whenever we consider any commons food regime. That as activists, we tend to think we are in the right, that our own vision of what a world should be is correct, and forget to think of 'the other'. While Levinas refuses to propose laws or moral rules or unifying solutions, he does warn us that politics without ethics – a 'permanent revolution' and a 'rebellion' of our own thoughts – will result in violence and unwanted consequences.

Despite these strengths, Levinas centres his philosophy on the human being itself and ends up falling short on feminist grounds and more broadly in other forms of lives (e.g. Irigaray, 1991, 2005; Kristeva, 1988; Benso, 2000; Hirst, 2009). In order to address humans and non-humans, and an ethical and political philosophy, all-encompassing inclusivity towards the others, also at a metaphysical level, I would argue that Lao Tzu's *Tao Teh Ching* seems to present a more convincing perspective to a commons food regime. As Hummel puts it, "The world has a place for humility, yielding, gentleness, and serenity. But to enjoy these benefits one must, 'Learn to unlearn one's learning.'" (Hummel in Lao Tzu, 2006:xii). The following short passage provides a glance of this ancient Chinese insight:

> *The Sage has no interest of his own;*
> *But takes the interests of the people as his own;*
> *He is kind to the kind;*
> *He is also kind to the unkind;*
> *For virtue is kind.*
> *He is faithful to the faithful;*
> *He is also faithful to the unfaithful;*
> *For virtue is faithful.*

It has taken me a long time to explain why care – and its political, biological, social, cultural, economic, and ethical and above all metaphysical dimensions – lies at the core of growing a commons food regime. You might find it bizarre that I bring care to the metaphysical level and wonder about its exact role in our regime-formation. Again, this thesis is not about philosophy, although it is part of the requirement to obtain an award of 'Doctor of Philosophy'. In short, the word 'metaphysics' literally means 'beyond physics'. While physics studies the 'science of nature' in its widest sense, metaphysics studies what lies beyond nature, which asks fundamental questions such as why does the universe exist? Why are things the way they are? Without too much complication, I find that Tudge's interpretation of metaphysics, arguably, represents a version of ordinary people's commons sense. Drawing on Sayyed Hosain Nasr's *Man and Nature* (1997), metaphysics is, Tuldge states,

> *a matter not of law but of attitude, of worldview…attitude in the end belongs in the realm of metaphysics; a fundamental idea, a feeling, about what is really important, that springs from a sense of what the universe is really like, and where we fit in it… Once we define the proper attitude to life, all else follows. In the end it's the thing that matters most. It should not be left to hazard (Tudge, 2011:142-143).*

As we are aware of numerous definitions that are available, some much less radical and inclusive than others, I have indicated what types of 'care' or 'caring practices' lie within a commons food regime. Care, as I see it, is a quality, both an innate characteristic in human beings, as well as a difficult task that we need to learn and to develop, which is embedded in the core of any emergent commons food regime. Care is an attitude and a worldview shared across a wide range of social agents, "forging a common platform based on some commons grounds" (Amin, 2011:xvii), to unite different discourses and movements. In this sense, care, as the core to a commons food regime, ensures that we are well-connected to both the world and history. In contrast to most theories in social sciences, a commons food regime is not only a concept for analysing what's happening in the world, but also a clear direction to help 'us commoners' to organise ourselves to collaborate, cooperate, and to govern our food-related resources whenever and wherever is possible more effectively and sustainably. While I understand it is important to participate in real struggles to confront both big government and corporations even though it is rather exhausting and often more disappointing than satisfying, I would argue it is equally important, if not more so, that we create new catalysts and exemplars which can be built on to what exists already around the world.

Thus, care is the core of growing a commons food regime, which illustrates a shared attitude, an orientation, a worldview, and the metaphysics underpinning all our undertakings. With this understanding of the significance of care, it is crucially necessary to revisit the two frameworks we have introduced in the previous section, namely, a framework for imagining sustainable food systems (Blay-Palmer, 2010) and a general framework for analysing sustainability of social-ecological systems (Ostrom, 2009). In the former framework, drawing on Morgan's 'politics of care', care is placed parallel to other policy levers, such as food democracy and food sovereignty. In a commons food regime, rather, care is placed at the core, and linked with two sets of concepts. First, care is linked with the finality of care (who and what we care for), which includes humans, society, life, ecology, history and the world. This covers the widest spatial and temporal dimensions, with greater flexibility depending on the given community. Second, drawing on 'sustainable food systems' and on discussion in this section, care is linked to five associated values, namely, democracy, justice, diversity, co-existence, and aesthetics.

While 'the centrality of trust' is well recognised in the general framework used to analyse the sustainability of social-ecological systems, I would argue that we should add 'the centrality of care' in parallel. In fact, trust would already be included in our concept of care, if there is mutual care, there is mutual trust. Trust within the concept of care may resolve some of the main criticisms of a new institutionalism, which is usually based on the assumptions of rational choice, arguing for example, that such a notion conveys a highly reductionist view of actors which instead act through both instrumental and psychologically complex sets of motives, shaped by cultural and social contexts (Rydin, 2003; Healey, 2006; Bogason, 2000). Care and caring practices aim to grow a commons food regime, which is more inclusive, reflective and even powerful in the sense of being able to redistribute power to others, empowering others, and not only ourselves.

Although there is an increasing attention to the significance of care, it is far from a mature state of affairs. As Tronto puts it, "we are still too early in the evolution of care thinking to dismiss some avenues of thought as unproductive" (1999:116). Support for this assessment can be seen in Baier's discussion of 'moral reflections'. The word 'morality' itself declares its root, *mores*, referring to our customs of co-existing, constituting morality's fundamental subject matter. However, this is not a given matter, but demands our willingness, persistence, attributes and wisdom. Moral reflection, she says, "as a social capacity, is still in its infancy, with many rough corners still to be rubbed smooth. A commons of the mind is by no means assured, where morality and political morality is concerned. Yet we cannot renounce the project of trying to establish such a commons" (Baier, 1997:63). With care we remember our values and how we act in the world and are also open-minded enough to be challenged from rather different perspectives and ready to embrace new ideas and ways of doing things. Indeed, we are both 'products' of our own systems but at the same time also the designer of a new system (a regime). On this note, the next section introduces what constitutes the key dimensions and elements of growing a commons food regime and how we can construct an integrative framework in more detail.

2.4.3 Constructing an integrative framework for growing a commons food regime

As argued in this thesis, a commons food regime is a modest response to a call for a new food regime in the 21st century. It represents a shift from a passive historical construct ('a tool of hindsight') defined by current food regimes theory, to developing 'a tool of insight'. This involves actively engaging with the politics of food through collective actions, self-organisation and self-governance to share any food-related resources, regardless of their form and size, and following a vision towards real world sustainability, with care at the core of any endeavour. The rest of the section expands on constructing an integrative framework for growing a commons food regime. In fact, this framework, to a large extent, can be seen as a synthesised response to my own reflections on food regimes theory towards sustainable transitions (2.2.3) and on optimising the scope of commons regimes (2.3.3). The word 'constructing' refers to the view that this framework is derived from the literature and builds on the ideas that come before it, while also being itself a 'work in movement'. The word 'growing' is used to capture the combination of strategic planning towards our vision, as well as the organic, emergent nature of a commons food regime which requires ongoing cultivation and care to ensure its living.

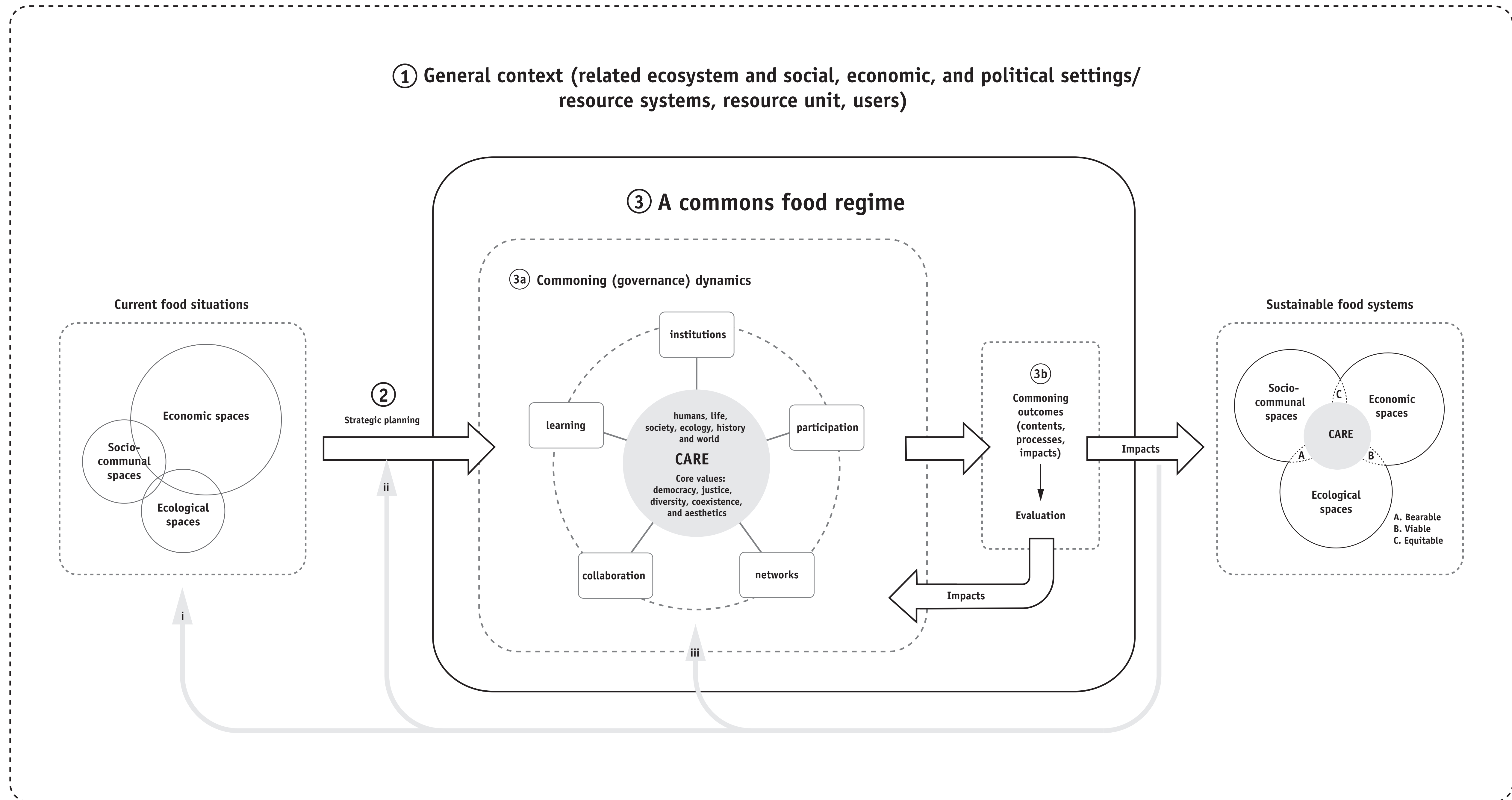
The framework for growing a commons food regime is integrative in at least two ways. ***First***, the root of a commons food regime is a compound concept integrating food regimes theory (associated with agri-food studies in a broader sense), commons regimes theory and adaptive governance. The framework provides a governance system for potentially transforming the current neoliberal food systems towards sustainable food systems. It is important to note that, although the concept of sustainable food systems is dynamic, this concept is taken as an idealised situation that we aim to achieve. However, this framework tries to overcome the limitations to producing the dynamic processes in the evolution of a commons food regime by illustrating different feedback loops. ***Second***, the framework integrates numerous components of a commons food regime including: the general context where a commons food regime is situated, its internal commoning dynamics to commoning outcomes and evaluation which help assess existing and potential impacts generated with a commons food regime and across the systems. This enables us to approach a commons food regime as a whole.

Illuminating the features of a commons food regime and processes of change towards more desirable alternatives requires a framework of intermediate complexity (Pahl-Wostl, 2009). Ostrom (2007) points out the importance of balancing complexity and oversimplification when constructing a framework of this kind, with an assertion of the weakness associated with the notion of 'panaceas' and an emphasis on the congruence of local contexts. What is needed is a diagnostic approach to take into account complexity without being too specific and thus unable to change direction. More importantly, users (e.g. analysts and practitioners) can adjust the framework that is suitable for their needs and inquiries at different spatial and temporal scales and using specific variables. A general framework may help to accumulate knowledge through empirical research and practices (Ostrom, 2009:420).

However, before I describe this integrative framework, three caveats are offered. Firstly, I recognise that this integration covers a lot of ground. It incorporates ideas and concepts from a wide range of literature, and some of these come from those supposedly diametrically 'opposed' theoretical camps but I hope to spell out a coherent approach which can generate greater synergies. Although the breadth of the framework brings strength to it, it also makes it difficult to adequately describe, within the bounds of this thesis. By developing a framework that encompasses the general context, strategic planning, commoning dynamics and commoning outcomes and evaluation, I have limited the space available to cover each element in depth.

Secondly, as an academic-activist, my ongoing engagement with critical food studies and community food movements in London has had profound impacts on how I select and construct those key elements of commoning dynamics within the framework. Different strands of scholarship might present those key elements in different ways (e.g. within new institutionalism, scholars organise all the key elements under the major category of 'institutions' and similarly, networks theorists might use 'networks' as a central thread to link up all other elements) or by choosing different elements. Those elements are not mutually exclusive. Presenting them in parallel indicates a more inclusive approach, which I consider more appropriate and sufficient in growing a commons food regime. This interdisciplinary approach is supported by the latest scholarship in critical food studies (e.g. food regimes theory, sustainable food systems and alternative food networks) as well as adaptive governance, adaptive institutions and adaptive capacity (e.g. Folke et al., 2002, 2005; Ostrom et al., 2002; Brunner et al., 2005; Nelson

Figure 2.4: An integrative framework for growing a commons food regime



et al., 2007; Folke, 2007; Armitage, 2008; Armitage and Plummer, 2010; Boyd and Folke, 2012).

Thirdly, as a first attempt to construct such a framework, it is bound to be incomplete and will eventually require more interdisciplinary and collaborative research. This is indeed in line with the ethos of a commons, which is supposed to be a living and emergent system evolving over time. On a related note, while the framework identifies several general sets of variables (i.e. dimensions and components) as well as the relationships, the purpose of the framework is not to suggest very specific casual linkages among those variables. It is neither possible nor desirable to provide a full portrayal of an emergent system like a commons food regime. Rather, deriving from existing theories and practices, the framework brings 'points of references' to help any individual and communities to organise themselves to grow a commons food regime in their specific contexts. This is what I call this framework as 'a tool of insight'. Following De Angelis's suggestion, I argue that growing a commons food regime is about "a matter of free individuals seizing the conditions of production and reproduction of their own lives, and no theoretical generalisation is adequate to describe what ultimately is the flow of life as lived by beautiful free subjects" (De Angelis, 2007:247).

Now, we can introduce the framework. This integrative framework for growing a commons food regime is depicted in Figure 2.4 as three nested zones, representing the broader context of a commons food regime, and its internal commoning dynamics and commoning outcomes and evaluation. The framework incorporates nested dimensions and their respective elements identified in other frameworks and literature but reorganises them in a coherent and systemic way. Taken together, this integrative framework aims to be used for broad applications across sectors, settings, processes, issues and time in building capacity for governing food-related shared resources and transforming the current commodity-based food systems. Below, I will describe these dimensions and elements in the following order:

1. General context;
2. Strategic planning;
3. A commons food regime
   3a. Commoning dynamics
   3b. Commoning outcomes and evaluation

1. General context:

The outermost zone represents the surrounding general contexts that come from the host of related ecosystems and social, economic, and political settings, and have links with other influences (e.g., resource systems, resource unit and users) that affect and are affected by a commons food regime. This is adapted from Ostrom's framework for analysing a social-ecological system (Ostrom, 2007:15182; also see Figure 2.3), but combines social, political, economic and related eco-systems into general context systems. Similarly, the broader context system can be divided into different subsystems (i.e. second, third and fourth tiers). Vertical geographical scales can be seen as another way to illustrate the nested and hierarchical nature of general context systems. Figure 2.5, as an example, shows that the general context can be divided from the widest global scale down to, national, city, local level and to the smallest unit – a single community. Similarly, we can also explore horizontally the general context on the same geographical scale (e.g. translocal or transnational). It is important to note that 'scale' itself is a socio-

political construction (Brenner, 2001; Marston, 2000; Herod, 2011), which requires critical attention when analysing the relevant contexts.

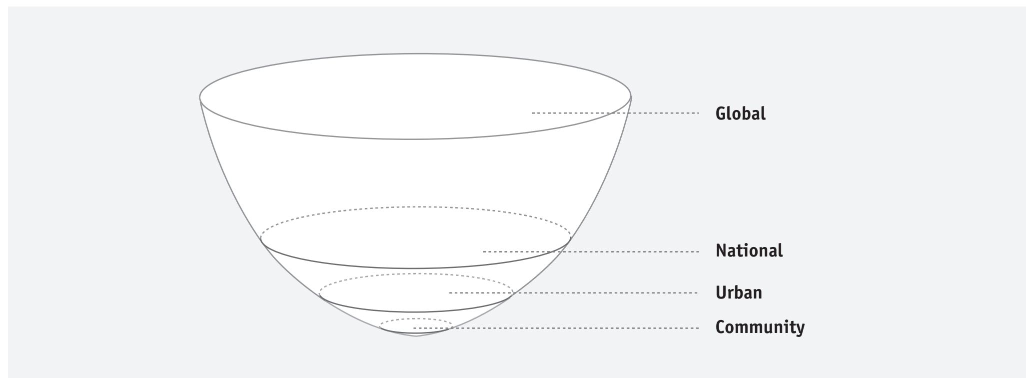


Figure 2.5 General context of a commons food regime situated in nested enterprises

As Ostrom repeatedly suggests: "Oversimplification reduces our resilience in coping with changes in our complex world. One should not make the analysis of any system more complex than needed for understanding how and why it works (or does not work)" (Ostrom, 2012:xviii). It is worth reminding ourselves of our discussion on adaptive commons governance in a complex world in section 2.3.1 with an emphasis on the importance of understanding change, uncertainty and unpredictability, nested hierarchies and scales, power and power relations, multiple pathways and trajectories, and contextualisation. However, it is also important to remember that analysts or practitioners have to decide what contextual factors need to be taken into account that are relevant to answer analysts' specific questions or practitioners' project objectives. The broader context is represented in this framework, not as a set of starting conditions but a dynamic surrounding space because external conditions may influence the performance of commoning dynamics and commoning outcomes not only at the beginning but at any time during the life of the commons food regime.

On the far left, borrowed from the framework of 'imagining sustainable food systems' (see Figure 2.2) which has incorporated Friedmann and McMichael's food regimes theory, the three circles represent the current food system where commodity-based neoliberal logic is the dominant form. On the far right, there are three circles with care in the centre, to indicate more sustainable food systems. Given that food systems are part of wider social-ecological systems, this well-balanced sustainable food system also envisions a broader scope for the sustainability of social-ecological systems as an ultimate goal.

2. Strategic planning for growing a commons food regime

> *We must be very weary of thinking that the achievement of a victory, of* ***any*** *victory, is a move towards the promised land…We need…the spread of alternative modes of doing, alternative processes of social cooperation and articulation of diversity, one that is more creative, flexible, diverse, innovative and at the same time communal and cohesive than capitalist disciplinary market…Commons are not won over from the state. Entitlements perhaps, not commons…Commons are produced by the people who define their own relations in sharing resources. These…relational victories go in the direction of building a social consensus around a certain number of things, themes, discourses and, most importantly, values around which we articulate our practice (De Angelis, 2005:49-50, 52, emphasis original).*

The arrow next to the three circles on the left (Figure 2.4), refers to the strategic planning needed for growing a commons food regime which can be initiated by the individual or collectively. This is a shift from a passive understanding and conceptualisation of the global food system under capitalism to an active engagement in making changes. As the quote above shows, commons are produced by the people who define their own relations in sharing resources. In this regard, strategic planning for growing a commons food regime is an explicit attempt to organise people to share any kind of food-related resources following the core values articulated earlier.

From a complex adaptive systems perspective, the world is understood as constantly changing in response to social and ecological environments. This is a different paradigm to the modernist understanding where reductionism is the norm. A commons food regime is itself a self-organising system with properties emerging through nested levels via multiple interactions and feedback mechanisms as relationships among entities are non-linear. Against such a complexity, to begin to grow a commons food regime, we need to develop appropriate 'strategies'. According to Olsson et al. (2011:278-280), three distinct features are of particular importance for regime-formation: (1) understanding where we are; (2) figuring out where to go; and (3) developing strategies for how to get there.

For 'understanding where we are', we identify the underlying values and perspectives, make sense of fragmented information, assess the causes of current trends of resource governance and management, and explore existing practices and solutions in response to change in a specific context. As Holling (2001:402) reminds us, "knowing where you are helps you to define what action needs to be taken". For example, understanding broader structural political economy as well as specific contexts is equally important in knowing how to improve effectiveness of food governance.

'Figuring out where to go' highlights the importance of identifying feasible scope and goals of a commons food regime. Although the long-term goal is to challenge and transform our current unsustainable food systems towards more sustainable ones, it might not be realistic to set ourselves such an ambitious goal without some solid foundation. It might be more effective if we break down our challenges into small tasks and create more probabilities for success as growing a commons food regime is the process of practising our values with different 'modes of doing' to help us towards a promised land and achieve a 'victory' no matter how modest the victory may be.

Lastly, 'developing strategies for how to get there' includes strategies for connecting actors and networks at multi-levels and cross-scales, looking for windows of opportunities for change, overcoming difficulties and even transforming crises into opportunities, generating new knowledge and innovation for experimenting in new governance initiatives and stabilising positive changes. The importance of Ostrom's (2005:44-45) notion of 'decision points' used by participants within a governance regime (or institutional context), is widely recognised.

3. A commons food regime

The concept of a commons food regime is a central feature in this framework. It contains both the commoning dynamics and commoning outcomes that shape the overall quality and extent to which a commons food regime is developed and is made effective. Although the form and direction of a commons food regime is shaped by

the broader context, this framework focuses more on two of its internal components: commoning dynamics and commoning outcomes and evaluation. Firstly, commoning dynamics is represented by the innermost zone with care located in the very centre. Secondly, the commoning outcomes, generated from commoning dynamics, include any actions, outputs, impacts, adaptation, and transformation both within a commons food regime and the general system context. Thus, there is a feedback line connecting the arrow from the box of commoning outcomes to the three circles indicating the current food situations on the far left. Evaluating commoning outcomes is an integral and important mechanism which is applied to both the outcomes and to the processes of achieving outcomes.

3a. Commoning dynamics

Unlike some scholars who suggest a linear process within commoning dynamics (e.g. Daniels and Walker, 2001; Gray, 1989) I take the view that commoning dynamics should be considered as cyclical and iterative interactions (Emerson et al., 2012). The five elements work in an interactive and iterative fashion to implement the initial purpose and scope of a commons food regime. It is important to note that while these elements are presented as separate categories, discussion under each will reflect their inter-relationship in practice. Care is the core of a commons food regime, representing an all-encompassing and holistic perspective with the finalities of care receivers (i.e. humans, society, life, ecology, history and world) and associated values (i.e. democracy, justice, diversity, co-existence, and aesthetics). Care means a shared attitude, an orientation and a worldview. Care and caring practices aim to make a commons food regime more inclusive, reflective and even powerful in the sense of being able to redistribute power to others, empowering others, and not only ourselves. These elements are carefully chosen with a view to increase our adaptive and transformative capacity to govern our shared resources (the commons) in ways which can represent the core values mentioned above in a complex world.

Traditionally, capacity building has been understood as 'technical' or 'functional' focusing on the ability of individuals and/or organisations to develop technical solutions to a technical problem more effectively (Ivey et al., 2006; Clarke and Oswald, 2010). However, for growing a commons food regime, which is itself a kind of social institution, what is needed is 'relational' capacity which calls upon a collective capacity for value practices among the given community or communities. In recent years, there has been an increasing body of research pointing to the correlation between adaptive and transformative capacity, and effective commons governance towards real sustainability in a complex world (Folke et al., 2005; Brondizio et al., 2009; Newig and Fritsch, 2009; Clarke and Oswald, 2010; Armitage et al., 2011; Boyde and Folke, 2012). Following Amitage and Plummer (2010), the approach taken to adaptive capacity in this thesis is integrative. It incorporates three important aspects including, first, the evolutionary dimension; second, the social processes with a diversity of actors, objectives and values; and third, adaptive capacity for self-organisation and self-governance for collective action to deal with scale, knowledge pluralism, change and uncertainty. In the following, these five elements of commoning dynamics are elaborated in more detail.

Institutions

The first key element in a commoning dynamics is that of institutions. Rather than organisational or physical structures, institutions can be formally and informally defined,

based on the nature of the processes of their development. While the formal institutions are associated with the governmental bureaucracies, the informal ones are of particular importance to commons governance, which relates to socially shared rules crafted by participants. These rules usually function outside the law and regulations. All rules are the result of implicit or explicit efforts to achieve desired outcomes of governing a commons, a shared resource that is vulnerable to social dilemmas among participants by creating positions that are required, allowed, or forbidden to take actions in relation to required, allowed, or forbidden states of the world (Crawford and Ostrom, 2005; Siddiki et al., 2011). According to the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) Framework, three levels of rules can be analysed: operational, collective choice and constitutional. Operational rules deal with day-to-day decision-making; collective-choice tend to deal with specific policy relevant to action situation and the constitutional level refers to a set of values including norms and principles which will guide the evolution of the resource governance regimes.

Here, apparently, institutions are more than 'rules of the games in society' (North, 1990:3), but consist of norms and values based on cultural, historical and ecological perspectives (McCay and Jentoft, 1998). Scott (2001) further differentiates between formal and informal institutions through three pillars of institutions: regulative institutions (what is formally allowed and not allowed); normative institutions (what is right and wrong judged by value systems and produced through gradual negotiation and deliberation which is more incremental and emergent) and cultural-cognitive institutions (what is thinkable and unthinkable, related to mental models and paradigms which influence systems understanding and problem setting and problem solving).

Blay-Palmer (2010:225) has identified a variety of alternative food institutions that facilitate the increasing realisation of a sustainable food system. These institutions include forms of civic agriculture, communities of food practice, stable public procurement, fair trade and working conditions, comprehensive processing and distribution infrastructure, regulated food spaces and support for stewardship and aesthetic values. Pothukuchi and Kaufman (1999) suggest two key reasons why planners should get involved in food. First, food is a basic human need and planners strive to design better places to serve human needs. Second, food systems are well connected with other systems and attention to interconnections within communities are close to planning's identity. They then identify how institutional arrangements could help community food functions including facilitating, alerting, framing and clarifying food policy, developing community food security strategies and monitoring and evaluation.

From an anti-capitalist perspective, one of the most radical examples is the English Diggers movement reclaiming the right of inclusive land use. More recently, a wide range of progressive institutions is now to be found around the world including community land trust as well as those radical cases presented in the earlier section including Brownhill et al's (2012) discussion on Kenya, and Shiva's (2005) on India and Biel's (2011) on Cuba. For example, Biel (2011:335) stresses the importance of low-input self-organised agricultural systems in creating a new mode of production, both in an ecological (physical) and institutional sense. Similarly, Friedmann and McNair (2008) state that many agri-food experiments and movements, emerging both in the North and South in the wake of anti-globalisation and resistance struggles, shed light on a possible future based on global interconnections among diverse farming systems embedded in their natural and cultural contexts. However, they suggest that these alternatives have followed "a non-confrontational approach to social transformation" and "the episodes

of that trajectory will be marked by institutional innovations that will have to overcome opposition from those whose interests are threatened" (Wright cited in Fridemann and McNair, 2008:427-8).

Central to a commons food regime is the aim to broaden food governance, shifting from focusing only on food policy objectives to governing any kind of food-related shared resources. However, in a commons governance "rules are not self-formulating, self-determining, or self-enforcing" (Ostrom, 1980:312), but rely on human agents who formulate them, apply them in particular situations, and attempt to enforce performance consistent with them (Aligica and Boettke, 2009, 2011). As Goodman et al. (2012:6) highlight the politics of alternative food system-making as relational and process-based, with a vision that something can always be improved by working in relationship with others. In other words, it is about greater social and political control of any shared food-related resources through extended civic governance. Indeed, questions such as 'whose rules rule' and 'whose values and knowledge determine how a given shared resource is governed in a given community?' point to the second key element of commoning dynamics: participation.

Participation

According to neo-institutionalism perspectives, the general theoretical answer to the question of when users will invest in making rules regarding their use of a commons, is still based on a cost-benefit calculation, i.e. users will not self-organise unless they perceive greater benefits than costs in their involvement in changing rules (Ostrom, 2001, 2009, 2011). However, beyond rational choice and incentive mechanisms, a commons food regime is committed to advancing its core values through widening the 'progressive' concept of civic participation. 'Participation' has different meanings for different agents in practice. Anstein (1969) identifies eight stages of citizen participation in the form of a ladder ranging from non-participation, manipulation and therapy, degrees of tokenism (informing, consultation, and placation) and degrees of citizen power (partnership, delegated power and citizen control). Chambers (1995) describes three main kinds of 'participation': first, as a cosmetic label to make a traditional top-down style of development appear 'good', second, a co-opted practice where the aim is merely to mobilise local labour to reduce the project cost, and third, as an empowering process. In Freidmann's view, 'people's empowerment' is the key to alternative development, which "places the emphasis on autonomy in the decision-making of territorially organized communities, local self-reliance (but not autarchy), direct (participatory) democracy, and experiential social learning" (1992:vii).

Yet, as Gaventa (2006; see Figure 2.6) asserts, simply creating new institutional arrangements is not enough. Progressive participation requires a power analysis which concerns the levels (local, national and global), spaces (closed, invited and claimed spaces) and forms of power (visible power – observable decision making; hidden power – setting the political agenda; and invisible power – shaping meaning and what is acceptable). According to Gaventa, "The type of space in which it is found, the level at which it operates and the form it takes" (ibid:30) will determine the dynamics of power in civic participation which can help to reflect on and analyse how strategies for change in turn change power relations. Indeed, participation is dynamic, not static, and rarely is there an ideal form of participation. Guijt and Shah (1998, cited in Taylor 2003) argue that participation will 'ebb and flow' depending on the stage and the particular issue of decision-making. Similarly, as Lang notes, "food policy cannot be understood as an issue

of consensus…the struggle for food democracy appears to ebb and flow…as the result of social forces competing for influence and power" (1999:218).

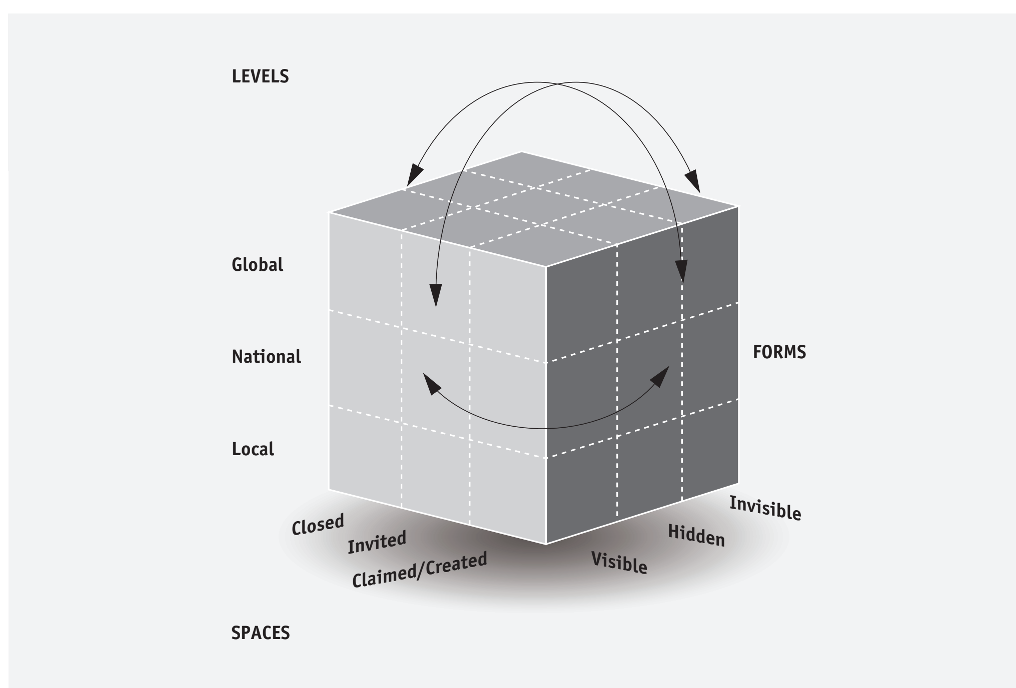


Figure 2.6 The power cube: the levels, space and forms of power (Source: Gaventa, 2006:25)

Food citizenship is a term which refers to "the practice of engaging in a variety of food-related behaviour (defined narrowly and broadly) that support, rather than threaten, the development of democratic, socially and economically just, and environmentally sustainable food systems" (Wilkins, 2005:271). These democratic practices can be seen as political spaces that engage people in democratic practices that occur as part of everyday life and at the same time impact food policy at different levels. Moving beyond the notion of people as consumers of food, 'food citizens' also engage in their communities and have an 'intimate' connection to the food they eat (Welsh and MacRae, 1998; DeLind 2002; Hassanein, 2003; Wekerle, 2004). While Welsh and MacRae (1998:246) state that participation is an essential part of food citizenship, DeLind recognises the spaces created by community food projects as "a commons… that expand(s) and deepen(s) cultural and ecological vision and mould(s) citizenship (2002:222). Wekerle (2004) argues that a food justice movement "opens up linkages with a wider range of conceptual frameworks drawn from the literature on democracy, citizenship, social movements, and social and environmental justice" (p. 379). Also grounded in the principles of social justice, Goodman et al. (2012) argue that to achieve participatory democracy in local food systems this participation must avoid exclusionary practices and local elite control and requires more attention to the notion of egalitarianism and 'reflexive localism' that "could work across difference, and thereby make a difference for everyone" (ibid:32).

Furthermore, food citizenship has been elaborated to encompass a much broader scope through the notion of food sovereignty. Food sovereignty implies a fundamentally new conception of citizenship, embedded in active participation in a transformative process that seeks to expand the realm of democracy and regenerate a diversity of locally autonomous food systems. Importantly, it demands that every member of the community participate in the process and simultaneously reflects on the challenges and

opportunities in developing pathways towards food sovereignty (Pimbert, 2010:2-3). This also echoes the ecosocialist/ecofeminism perspective of people's sovereignty and commons which considers a wide range of direct democracy, experimenting with new modes of horizontal, participatory and collaborative citizen participation, together with indigenous practices of consensus making (e.g. Bennholdt-Thomsen and Mies, 1999; Shiva, 2005; Tuner and Brownhill, 2010). Therefore, as Friedmann (2004) suggests, networks are central to this process of interactions, connection and distribution of power, knowledge, experiences, and resources necessary to address complex and interrelated problems encountered in a commons food regime.

Networks

Recent research on adaptive commons governance has identified that networks are closely related to the survival of the commons in a complex world (Carlsson and Sandstrom, 2008). The notion of multi-level and multi-layered interactions among actors in a networked governance are expected to play a key role in better coordinating people, improving flows and quality of information, integrating and mobilizing knowledge of ecosystem dynamics (Young, 2002; Dietz et al., 2003; Ostrom, 2005; Lebel et al., 2006). In the same vein, Born and Purcell (2006:196) remind us that food activist interventions often fall into 'the local trap' and indicate the significance of scale of participation that scale is not a goal in itself. It becomes a vehicle that may help to achieve any range of goals that will depend "on the agenda of those who are empowered by scalar strategy" (ibid). Similarly, Meadowcroft also highlights that "attention must also be paid to the pattern of distribution" (to whom and how it is spread across actors and subsystems), as well as the "character of that power and the resources upon which it is based" (2007:308).

Networked governance also implies polycentric systems, both vertical and horizontal linkages, where decisions-making is distributed in a nested hierarchy which is assumed to gain a higher capacity to adapt to a nonlinear and changing environment (Ostrom, 2005; Crona and Bodin, 2012). Thus, networked arrangements predict better resilience to the institutional system, due to the enhanced capacity to diffuse negative effects and distribute benefits (Kooiman et al., 2005; Olsson et al., 2004).

While networks can contribute to building resilience and increasing adaptive capacity (Tompkins and Adger, 2004), they are influenced by its structures and types of connections. In terms of network structures, key properties include density, centralisation and heterogeneity (Carlsson and Sandstrom, 2008). Two major types of networks are bonding and bridging ties, with the former referring to strong ties between close associates and peers and the latter connecting individuals and organisations with greater special differences, operating on the edges of different domains of practice (Newman and Dale, 2005; Bodin et al., 2006; Bodin and Crona, 2009). A number of scholars have shown that responsibility and accountability are dispersed among a variety of actors, and this in turn can reduce threats to vulnerable groups and build adaptive capacity in a commons governance regime (Lebel et al., 2006). Additionally, trust, social capital and care are highlighted as a feature of social interaction that is required for true partnership and collaborative engagements (Brunner et al., 2005; Folke et al., 2005).

One of the aims for a commons food regime is greater integration of theoretical debates about food regimes theory and actor networks theory as suggested by Friedmann (2009;

see discussion in section 2.2.3). While food regimes theory predominantly focuses on characteristics of industrial capitalism and the ongoing global restructuring of the production and distribution of food, scholarly attention to local food networks is an example of resistance to the global corporate food system that has revealed dynamic tensions between market-based alternatives and food and agriculture movements. Interestingly, literature on 'alternative food networks' has become mainstream in food studies over the past years (e.g. Morgan et al., 2006; Holloway et al., 2007; Maye et al., 2007; Fonte, 2008; Jarosz, 2008; Harris, 2008, 2010; Goodman et al., 2012). Whether these food movements are framed as food networks, food webs or food systems, these terms indicate the complex and nonlinear relationships (e.g. household, neighbourhood, community, regional and international, etc.) involved in getting food from the field to the fork.

Research has challenged the dichotomies of global/local, conventional/alternative, nature/culture, markets/movements. In fact, some of these food movements and 'alternative' practices can even 'coexist' or 'coevolve' and be 'mutually constituted' with the capitalist economy (Leyshon et al., 2003; Gibson-Graham, 2006; DuPuis and Block, 2008). As Lee and Leyshon (2003:196) point out, "their [alternative food economies] relationship with the 'other' – the mainstream – remains unavoidable, ambivalent, unequal and full of contradiction". However, it is precisely these ambivalent, unequal relationships and their inherent contradictions which present us with some 'spaces of hope' (Lee and Leyshon, 2003) or 'politics of ubiquity' (Gibson-Graham, 2010). As in a complex world, there are multiple pathways and trajectories that may be unknowable and discontinuous. Systems changes, whether incremental, progressive, or radical, are not mutually exclusive forms of change (Armitage, 2008). Instead these food movements are mutually reinforcing and more importantly, we should channel our efforts to connect different interventions and alternatives, and engage in many arenas and across all spatial scales (i.e. local, national and global) in understanding and resolving challenges as was argued earlier (e.g. Born and Purcell, 2006; Gaventa, 2006; Meadowcroft, 2007).

With this networks perspective in mind, three main strands of thinking are of particular importance to a commons food regime. The first is a 'hybrid' approach to the politics of food (Whatmore, 2002; Braun, 2006; Rocheleau et al., 1996; Rocheleau, 2007), which seeks to overcome unavoidable tensions and contradictions, and brings together fragmentation and differentiation in food movements. Braun (2005:647) states that local food networks can be "conceived anew, as 'hybrid' spaces, and as local-global spaces, but also as spaces in which ethical and political consideration extends beyond the bounds of the human". Friedmann and McNair (2008:430) suggest that:

> *Interstitial social transformation is an idea that invites us to depart from a polar divide between autonomous oppositional movements on one side, and co-optation by powerful corporations and states on the other. It is a muddy terrain into which one can sink at any time, yet perhaps also one from which one can renew and redirect the journey as swamps are mapped.*

Leyshon et al. (2010:122) research the similar conclusion that "by thinking the economy differently, we can see that what on the surface may appear to be a series of inconsequential small acts…actually draw attention to the real limits to capitalism. So while resistance may be hard work, and may suffer as many retreats as advances, it is by no means futile".

Following this relational perspective, the second strand of thinking refers to the construction of space and place. While local food movements are often rooted in place – historically, culturally and geographically – they are also connected transnationally through wider social movement networks, that is, place-based but not place-bound practices (Esobar, 2001; Friedmann, 2008; Baker, 2009). This responds to Amin's call for a shift from "politics of place to politics in place" as developing "a nonterritorial way of viewing place politics in an age of global connectivity" (Amin, 2002:397). It also responds to Massey's call to face "the challenge of our constitutive interrelatedness – and thus our collective implication in the outcomes of that interrelatedness; the radical contemporary of an ongoing multiplicity of others, human and nonhuman; and the ongoing and ever-specific project of the practices through which that sociability must be configured." (Massey, 2005:195). Indeed, as Harris argues, constructions of place can facilitate "further debate around the 'place of food' in our society and communities, exploring the nature of place-based politics, the ties between spatial and temporal frameworks and relationships between place, responsibility and morality" (Harris, 2010:366).

Finally, the third strand of thinking points to the wider consideration of the non-human agent (actant). As Latour insists, the importance of the active properties of non-human agents in a network's collective capacity to act cannot be ignored "because they attach us to one another, because they circulate in our hands and define our social bond by their very circulation" (1993:89). For example, food itself expresses a kind of agency, interacting with people, institutions, technologies and policies. Drawing on the indigenous tradition, LaDuke (2002) claims that food is thought of as both a cyclical process, which links past, present and future, and also as central to the reciprocal relations between non-humans and humans and the recovery of people and the land, weaving people and cultural identity within the web of life. The intellectual, emotional, sensorial and spiritual qualities of food are all of significance in the cultural and political identity of people and community. Another important non-human actant is the capacity of communication technology to connect people. As James (1985, cited in Turner and Brownhill, 2010:103),

> *The means of communication, means of information today are such that it is impossible to believe that as time goes on it does not mean greater and greater communication between people, which means, ultimately, a democratic system of some sort…I'm speaking in particular about the objective materials, physical means of living, means of communication, means of spreading information.*

The horizontal quality of these non-human agents may increase the importance of both 'hard' and 'soft' infrastructures that can help participants support and abide with the vision and values of a commons food regime.

These three strands of thoughts – hybridity to overcome unavoidable dichotomies in politics of food; construction of place and space; and the significance of non-human actants in food networks – are indeed examples of 'a tool of insight' that would help us become more effective in growing a commons food regime.

Collaboration

The fourth key element of commoning dynamics is collaboration, which has become a common word in many different fields, though keeping its varied definitions and

usages. Collaborative governance is at the heart of a commons regime where a variety of community-based participants organise themselves in collective resource management. If the last element, networks, presents a myriad of 'nodes' and 'dots' in a complex system, collaboration requires an integrative and holistic approach to 'connect the dots' that avoids the problems of looking at systems in a piecemeal, fragmented way and strives to maximise synergies emerging from a commons food regime.

Drawing from diverse research and practice, Emerson et al. (2012) offer a useful overview of key variables that affect collaborative outcomes (See Table 2.4) Drivers are differentiated from contextual variables without which it is assumed collaboration would not be triggered. As Ansell and Gash (2008:17) assert, "commitment to the process" is fundamental to collaborative dynamics. In turn, collaborative dynamics are cyclical or iterative processes which entail three interacting components. First, principled engagement refers to basic principles of engagement and participation broadly articulated in the literature, such as democracy, fairness, civility, inclusiveness, representation and quality communication. Second, shared motivation refers to a self-reinforcing cycle and emphasis is placed on social capital and solidarity. Third, capacity for joint action refers to both a new generated capacity, as well as to sustaining and growing that capacity for shared commitment. It is assumed that the productive and self-reinforcing interactions of these three components will determine the performance of collaborative dynamics.

	Collaborative dynamics		
Drivers	**Principled engagement**	**Shared motivation**	**Capacity for joint action**
Leadership	Discovery	Mutual trust	Institutional arrangements
Consequential incentives	Definition	Mutual understanding	Leadership
Interdependence	Deliberation	Internal legitimacy	Knowledge
Uncertainty	Determination	Shared commitment	Resources

Table 2.4 Key variables for collaborative governance (Source: adapted from Emerson, et al., 2012:7)

Since a commons food regime is committed to social change with a specific vision and associated values, it is important to highlight the value of collective strategic actions. Writing in the context of planned collective action led by civil society organisations to address the social injustice faced by the urban poor, Levy (2007) identifies a number of strategies to create a synergy as a way of assessing outcomes of such collective actions. These components include: (1) the construction of collective intent or a shared vision; (2) reframing diagnosis which has two aspects – 'read the cracks' and challenging the dominant discourses; (3) the development of strategies with selectively set precedents for alternative ways of addressing social injustice to reduce resistance at the institutional level; (4) the development of organisational and institutional capacity; (5) dialogues and advocacy to influence and persuade powerful actors to get involved; and (6) public learning to nurture and enhance strategic actions to challenge social change. However, given the different positions and priorities possessed by these civil society groups, while they may share a fundamental commitment to improve the livelihood of the poor, some conflictual relationship can still be found, which is similar to Sen's (1990) notion of 'co-operative conflict'.

This 'co-operative conflict' is of particular relevance to Giménez and Shattuck's call for strategic alliances (Giménez and Shattuck, 2011), Amin's (2011) 'convergence in diversity' and McMichael's (2008) 'unity of diversity' in the context of different strands of food movements, especially those of radical and progressive ones. Learning from Levy's (2007) analysis, collaboration for social change may not require ideal consensus and full agreement of everything among all participants and organisations, but sharing certain commitments serves as a good starting point. This is closely related to some new social movement concepts such as Melucci's (1989) idea of formulating 'we' even in certain conflicting situations. In the meanwhile, we are encouraged to go beyond the binary of radical or piecemeal improvement as we need both to generate synergies. As Wakefield (2010) puts it:

> *Ameliorative change deals ONLY with the outcome (e.g. people [who] are hungry need feeding), while transformative change deals with the root cause (people are hungry because of structural issues that must be addressed). Dealing with only the consequence and not the cause means you will never solve anything; dealing with only the cause means the people who are facing the consequence NOW will suffer (Wakefield, 2010, cited in Blay-Palmer and Koc, 2010:243).*

In an attempt to resolve this 'conflictual' relationship, Wood (2007) proposes a new form of 'meta-design', to plan for a sustainable urban infrastructure that can bring many levels of synergy to the modern life-style. In contrast with 'design', 'meta-design' refers to a planning process that is less predictive, and is more a process of 'seeding' consensual change, which invites a more entrepreneurial, holistic, multi-layered, multi-disciplinary and inclusive approach.

Similarly, Jones et al. (2011) argue that shifting from a linear to a circular metabolism (i.e. virtuous circles) reflects two natural principles. The first is that natural systems are based on cycles; and the second is that there is very little waste in natural systems. The 'waste' from one species is food for another, or is converted into a useful form by natural processes and cycles (see Figure 2.7). For example, highly sustainable agricultural systems, influenced by agroecological and permacultural thinking, have low external inputs, are usually decentralised, diversified, and regenerative systems, and rely on local organisations to facilitate collective action and co-ordinated management to sustain these circular systems at different spatial scales. In addition to localised food systems, they present a number of positive case studies of the implementation of sustainable circular systems that integrate food, water, energy and waste systems in Asia, Cuba and Ecuador. The key argument is that greater synergy can be obtained when different systems can be integrated and developed simultaneously. Figure 2.8 illustrates the social, economic and environmental benefits of such circular systems which can contribute large reductions in fossil fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions, and can increase food, water and energy security as well as the revitalisation of local economy and improvements in local environments.

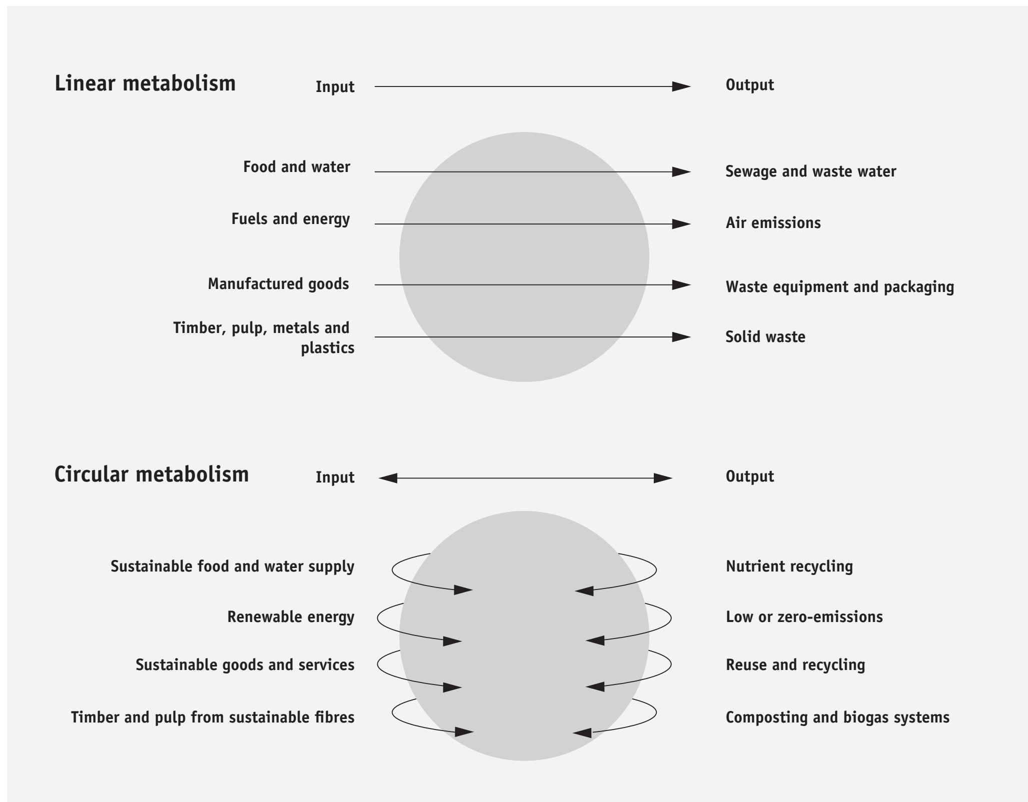


Figure 2.7 Settlements with a linear and a circular metabolism (Source: Jones et al., 2011:65)

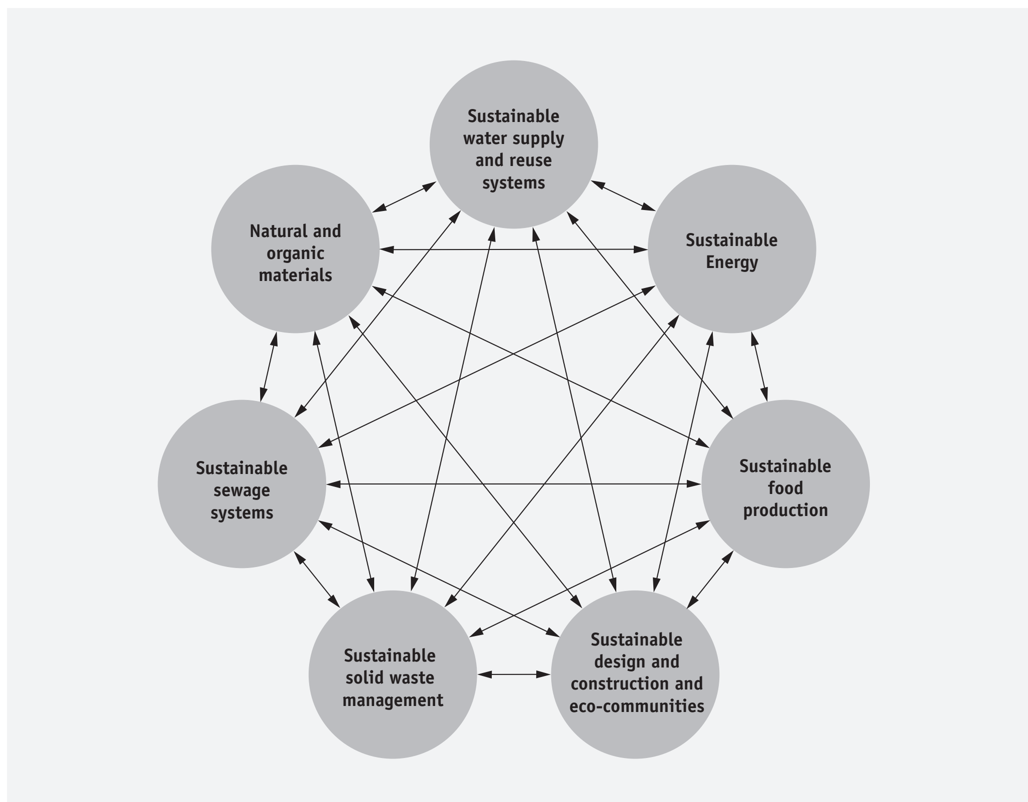


Figure 2.8 Integrated approaches to food, water, energy and fibre supply (Source: Jones et al., 2011:84)

Both design approaches emphasise the importance of learning from nature and advocate the notion of 'virtuous circles' which represents an alternative to the current linear frame of thinking leading to vicious cycles. Like gardening in a large team, Wood (2007:82)

suggests, meta-designers have to "see their work as a long term and continuous process of consensual cultivation, nurturing and incremental learning and adaptation to a self-inclusive nature". Rather than focusing only on individual gains and losses as immediate outcomes of collaborative actions, their approaches help us rethink and move beyond such human constraints which tend to care more for ourselves than for others. As argued repeatedly in this thesis, care is the core of a commons food regime, not only for ourselves, but also for others. Indeed, Levinas reminds us that caring practices are not necessarily self-evident ways to behave but a difficult task which requires solid motivations and ongoing learning (Diedrich et al., 2003). Thus, a more inclusive kind of collaboration in a commons food regime requires a learning process to build our capacity, both individually and collectively, to generate greater synergy through 'virtuous circles'.

Learning

The last important element of commoning dynamics is learning, which has been identified as a key feature and a normative goal to support adaptive commons governance to achieve sustainability under changing conditions of complex social-ecological systems (Gunderson and Holling, 2002; Berkes et al., 2003; Armitage et al., 2007; Armitage, 2008; Pahl-Wostl, 2009; Poteete et al., 2010; Armitage et al., 2011; Boyd and Folk, 2012). As Biel reminds us, "The heritage of several centuries of capitalism is that we have forgotten how to organise differently, and will need to re-learn this" (2011:337). Korten also points out that "neither researcher, administrator, nor villager are likely to achieve his or her potential for contribution to development until they join as partners in mutual learning processes, committed not to the search for magical blueprints, but to the building of new capacities for action" (Korten, 1980:502). Learning involves the collaborative or mutual development and sharing of knowledge by multiple stakeholders and much emphasis is placed on the importance of social or institutional learning (Parson and Clark, 1995; Diduck et al., 2005; Keen et al., 2005). Different types of learning are conceptualised such as single, double and triple-loop learning (see Table 2.5), each of which demands greater focus on the sub-text of learning such as individual and collective learning, and focus of social learning (Walker et al., 2002; Folke et al., 2005; Armitage et al., 2007).

	Single-loop learning	**Double-loop learning**	**Triple-loop learning**
Flood and Romm (1996)	Are we doing thing right?	Are we doing the right thing?	Is rightness buttressed by mightiness and/or mightiness buttressed by rightness?
Hargrove (2002)	A change in the frame of reference and the calling into question of guiding assumptions	A change in the frame of reference and the calling into question of guiding assumptions	A transformation of the structural context and factors that determine the frame of reference, which implies a change in paradigm and in the end also in underlying norms and values
Armitage et al., (2008)	Fixing errors from routines	Correcting errors by adjusting values and policies	Correcting errors by designing governance norms and protocols

Table 2.5 Varied conceptions of multi-loop learning framework

Knowledge is a key component of learning and a diversity of knowledge types and multiple sources of knowledge are fundamental to commons regimes. Since knowledge is a product of specific values, cultures and social relations (Forester, 1999; Argyris and Schon, 1974; Forester, 1989; Argyris et al., 1985), it is important to differentiate the role of different members or groups in the production of knowledge, the legitimisation and acceptance of knowledge frameworks or 'ways of knowing and learning' and the representation of reality, which requires an understanding of power relations involved (Armitage, 2008). Emphasis is placed on building a holistic and integrated knowledge system and avoiding a reductive approach (Folke et al., 2005; Olsson et al., 2006). Knowledge itself is a dynamic process and contingent upon being constructed, validated and adapted to changing environments (Davidson-Hunt and O'Flaherty, 2007:393). In the long run, learning how to integrate theory and practice as well as creating spaces for co-production of knowledge is justified. This can be guided by assessing the issues of the who, what, how, and why of learning during such processes. For example, Diduck (2010:217) identifies multi-level learning units including individual learning, action group learning, organisational learning, network learning and societal learning. Additionally, special attention should be paid to livelihood enhancement and the inclusion of more marginalised stakeholders to participate in learning processes (Armitage et al., 2008).

Some earlier studies have specifically explored the relationship of learning and knowledge in agricultural paradigm shifts existing within academic literature (e.g., Hassanein and Kloppenburg, 1995; Roling and Wagemakers, 1998; Morgan and Murdoch, 2000). More recently, there has been an increasing interest in investigating the significance of social learning, knowledge generation and meaning-making in agri-food systems. For example, Petty (2002:156) discusses how to build ecological literacy and capacity with related cognitive and learning systems. He argues that "sustainability should be seen as a process of social learning." Similarly, Goodman et al. (2012:8) argue that shared knowledge practices in alternative food networks reveal the formative linkages between materiality and meaning between producers and consumers, which are the foundation of alternative communities of practice and of the collective learning processes behind their growth and consolidation. These practices also represent a terrain of contested knowledge claims, associated with construction of quality, modes of governance and political imaginaries. In addition, given the evident flux, complexity and contestation in agri-food systems, Hinrichs (2010) argues for a number of important themes with regard to knowledge and learning in approaching sustainable food systems. These include: the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration and complex 'ecosystem of expertise'; an understanding of the emergent and provisional nature of knowledge; the inevitability of 'trade-offs'; how to draw boundaries for the system; and the significance of power and politics.

Among the different strands of thinking in knowledge and learning, I find the vision of the food sovereignty movement – developed by Via Campesina – is the most relevant to a commons food regime. Among many other scholars discussing the importance of knowledge and learning in the development of food sovereignty movement (e.g. Schneider and McMichael, 2010; Altieri, 2009), Pimbert (2006, 2009, 2010) makes a comprehensive case for the vision of transformative knowledge and ways of learning for food sovereignty as summarised in Table 2.6.

Transforming knowledge (Why?)	Transforming ways of knowing and learning (How?)
1. Beyond reductionism and the neglect of dynamic complexity • Current knowledge and agricultural science cannot sufficiently explain and respond to the complex dynamics of agri-food systems and are inadequate to the task of achieving sustainable agriculture and natural resource management. • This approach tends to favour corporate profits and ignore more holistic knowledge systems that emphasise the fluid and ever-changing complexity between biodiversity, culture, spirituality and livelihoods of the community.	1. Democratising and liberating science and technology research • Opening up decision-making bodies and a governance structure • Using regular facilitated platforms such as citizen panels, citizen juries and participatory action research and rethink research for the public good • Re-organising conventional scientific and technological research and education to encourage participatory and inclusive co-production of knowledge and learning systems that emphasise the values of social inclusion, diversity, emancipation and empowerment • Developing web-based and digital knowledge networks
2. Overcoming myths of people and environmental relations Three key challenges are identified: • Efforts to reclaim knowledge for diversity and citizenship within communities and across scales and integrate multiple networked organisations. • New scientific insights should be incorporated with political ecology perspectives by asking important questions such as by whom, with whom and for whom research is conducted. • Gendered relations of ecologies, economies and politics should be more systematically investigated.	2. Advocating citizen-led innovations and self-organised networks of knowledge production • Networks for autonomous learning and action value experiential knowledge, tacit knowledge, and diverse interpretations • Collective knowledge; diverse stakeholders and all members involved in such networks act as an 'extended peer community' and should emphasise in situ validation of useful knowledge and recognise and legitimise plural perspectives • A dual power relationship between a formal science community and yet maintain decentralised networks of safe spaces for more autonomous and plural ways of learning • An explicitly value-oriented research process calls for a more holistic and reflective practice of inquiry and learning.
3. Rethinking mainstream economy While a 'pro-growth' policy narrative is still a dominant social-economic discourse within powerful bureaucracies which results in severe natural and social crises, we need to rethink and challenge this mainstream economics based on different sets of values such as reciprocity, solidarity, respect, equity and sustainability.	3. Enabling contexts and conditions for social learning and action • Developing methodologies for deliberation and inclusion in 'safe spaces' for generating new knowledge. • Appropriate institutional arrangements and incentives are required for fostering a participatory culture in the existing research community • Reclaim both political and economic democracy to ensure some basic material security for citizens to learn and exercise their right to participate in shaping our agri-food systems towards sustainability.

Table 2.6 Transformative knowledge and ways of learning for food sovereignty (adapted from Pimbert, 2010)

Summary of commoning dynamics

Once a commons food regime has been initiated, commoning dynamics and its five important elements are set in motion. Although these five elements are presented independently, there is an underlying logic to the order of this presentation. Commoners start by making their own institutions (the first element) to manage any kind of shared food-related resources. Institutions refer to rules, norms and values at different levels (e.g. constitutional, collective action and operational rules). Secondly, commoners are expected to invest efforts in the issues of participation (the second element), such as the key concept of 'food citizenship' in its broadest definition, inclusion/exclusion, power relations, empowerment, and finding the spaces for change. Thirdly, in attempting to widen the scope of civic participation and multi-level linkages to build adaptive capacity for a commons food regime, it is also essential to manage networks (the third element) for an appropriate balance between attributes such as heterogeneity, centralisation and intensity. Particularly, an understanding of the 'hybrid' and relational nature of food movements, the construction of space and place and the role of non-human actants is warranted. Fourthly, developing networks themselves may not be enough; it is essential to foster meaningful and innovative collaboration (the fourth element) in order to generate synergies through virtuous circles. Finally, learning (the fifth element) and knowledge go hand in hand. Transformative vision and processes of learning presented above are relevant to all the arguments and ideas made on the important elements of commoning dynamics. Table 2.7 illustrates all the components in each key element of the commoning dynamics introduced in this integrative framework.

Key elements	Components
Care	Care receivers (humans, society, life, ecology, history, and the world)
	Core values (democracy, justice, diversity, coexistence, aesthetics)
Institutions	Forms of institutions (regulative, normative, cognitive-cultural institutions)
	Levels of institutions (operational, collective action, constitutional)
	Ideological divides and unity (piecemeal reform, progressive, radical)
Participation	Feature of participation (cosmetic, capacity building, citizen control)
	Power relation of participation (forms, levels and spaces)
	Food consumerism vs. food citizenship (sustainable consumption to progressive citizenship)
Networks	Structure of network (density, centralisation, heterogeneity)
	Multi-level and multi-layer interactions (vertical, horizontal, across sectors/systems)
	Relational/hybrid/co-existing food networks (Global/local, nature/culture, markets/movement, place/space, humans/non-humans)

Collaboration	Motivations (Self-interest, mutual/symbiosis, super symbiosis)
	Collaborative mechanisms (design approaches, strategies and processes)
	Collaborative impacts (single effects to virtuous circles)
Learning	Types of learning (multi-loop and multi-level learning)
	Perspectives of knowledge (production, dissemination, utilisation)
	Transformative learning and knowing (democratisation of knowledge and citizen-led innovations)

Table 2.7 Components within each key element of commoning dynamics

Of course, in practice, these elements will interact in much more unpredictable and complicated ways. Therefore, by using care as the core element, and by extending to multiple care-receivers (i.e. humans, society, life, ecology, history and the world) which are associated with a set of values (i.e. democracy, justice, diversity, co-existence, and aesthetics), the quality and extent of commoning dynamics depend on the development of self-organised interactions among the five important elements discussed above.

3b. Commoning outcomes and evaluation

In a broad sense, 'commoning outcomes' refers to the result of commoners' interactions governing and managing a shared resource (a commons). There are various approaches to evaluating outcomes, ranging from the nature (e.g. formative, summative, goal-free and meta-evaluation, see Scriven, 1991), focus (i.e. assessing processes, outputs, outcomes and/or impacts) and timing of the evaluation (i.e. throughout the life or at the end of project), to the participants (direct and indirect/remote) and methods used (e.g. quantitative and/or qualitative). Ultimately, decisions over what to investigate, for whom and for what purpose determine how the evaluation is approached.

Within new institutionalism, two aspects of outcomes are considered: predicting and evaluating outcomes. In a commons situation, participants or analysts can make strong or weak inferences about the outcomes, depending on an action situation (e.g. contextual factors, community and actor's attributes and rules-in-use). Prediction of the outcomes may largely influence the likelihood of self-organising for collective actions and the strategies they employ (e.g. Ostrom 2005, 2011; Poteete et al., 2010). Institutional analysts usually evaluate the outcomes in order to judge the effectiveness of institutional arrangements. For example, Walls (2011:36-37) argues that "a regime or institutional arrangement can be assumed to serve as a means to an end...without this concluding step, it becomes more difficult to argue the case for better or worse outputs, or to relate regimes to the outputs they tend to generate". It is widely recognised that "Processes and outcomes cannot be neatly separated…because the process matters in and of itself and because the process and outcome are likely to be tied together" (Innes and Booher, 1999:415). Thus, evaluative criteria are applied to both the outcomes and the processes of achieving outcomes, which can be broadly divided into three major categories within the framework for analysing a social-ecological system where a commons is located: (1) social performance measures (e.g. effective rules, efficient, equitable, accountable, sustainable, conformance to values of local actors); (2) ecological

performance measures (e.g. overharvested, resilience, diversity, sustainability); and (3) externalities to other social-ecological systems (Ostrom, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011).

However, regarding evaluation, we need to avoid becoming rather imposing from an outsider's view. Pretty points out that 'who gets to tell the stories matters greatly" (Pretty, 2002:23). Smit and Wandell (2006) suggest a more bottom-up and participatory approach beginning from the community level where community participants can be autonomous evaluators who can decide and establish their own indicators which are most relevant to their livelihood and local social processes involved. This is particularly relevant given that changes in a complex world are rarely linear and call for closer attention to dynamic relationships. They stress that:

> *This body of work…tends not to presume the specific variables that represent exposures, sensitivities, or aspects of adaptive capacity, but seeks to identify these empirically from the community. It focuses on conditions that are important to the community…It employs the experience and knowledge of community members to characterise pertinent conditions, community sensitivities, adaptive strategies, and decision-making process related to adaptive capacity or resilience (Smit and Wandel, 2006:285).*

Admittedly, evaluating outcomes of growing a commons food regime is complex as they are often multi-layered and hard to assess. There are a number of key principles including power-equalising, action-oriented evaluation, recognition of different knowledge systems, mutually accepted working ethics and evaluation; creation of safe spaces for co-enquiry, with the emphasis here being on the inclusion of the weak and marginalised, and evaluation is an ongoing process throughout the entire enterprise of growing a commons food regime.

Finally, as a way of summing up both the commoning outcomes and evaluation, and the entire integrative framework, I would like to follow De Angelis's insight. Evaluating commoning outcomes can be seen as an ongoing endeavour to remind us that "The only way we can envisage radical change is one that seeks to practise social change… Our movement must be one that seeks to practise what it preaches, one in which the ends and organisational means seek to coincide" (De Angelis, 2005:52). The challenges of transforming our current neoliberal food systems into sustainable food systems, and ultimately the sustainability of social-ecological systems as a whole, are immense. Constructing this integrative framework for growing a commons food regime is a step towards answering the global question of how to organise ourselves to engage politics of food collectively and collaboratively.

2.5 Conclusion: entering a new epoch of history

At the beginning of this chapter I introduced the evolution of food regimes theory since its inception in the 1980s. I take McMichael's view that food regimes theory is a 'public good' open to different ways of understanding and interpreting the food system. Following a food regime scholar's attitude – a desire to look for the transition towards a contingent and contested development, politically open to multiple potential outcomes – I join Friedmann's 'invitation' to the conversation of the food regimes theory with five reflections.

First, an interdisciplinary and collaborative research agenda is central to future food regimes thinking. Second, food regimes theory is constantly in-the-making, from its initial more structural approach to the current more inclusive approach. This latter approach can serve as a spine for a possible contextual frame to allow different narratives of politics of food in a relational juxtaposition. Third, food regimes scholars have explicitly connected their own participation, in a variety of political movements, to their academic work. However, while their political and ethical engagement provides a new architecture of food regime theorisation, the fourth reflection is my critique of the lack of a practical approach to the question of how we can actually engage with change. This is of particular importance given that the current landscape of food movements is complex, diverse and, above all, fragmented. A coherent and strategic approach that can respond to the strong calls for 'convergence in diversity' across food movements is urgently needed. I argue that rethinking 'food governance' in its broadest sense is essential for transforming our current food situations towards sustainability. This brings me to the final reflection on the different definitions of regime. I suggest there is great potential in the definition of regime as an emergent mode of governance and specifically in commons mode of governance regime (i.e. commons regimes).

Following these reflections, I moved to the second section of this chapter where I explored the concepts of commons regimes in a complex world. Taking a new institutionalism perspective, I reviewed the evolution of commons theory, predominately developed by Ostrom and her colleagues, in challenging Hardin's 'Tragedy of the Commons' and they proved that humans have the capacity to self-organise in order to govern shared resources. In recent years the rise of the commons has been evident and a myriad of new commons (e.g. cultural commons, neighbourhood commons, knowledge commons, and global commons) have also emerged. Although Ostrom's 'design principles' (with some modifications), derived from her intensive studies on community-based natural resource governance, are still influential, the latest research has shifted to a complex social-ecological systems and political ecology approach in governing commons, which emphasises the importance of uncertainty and change, and inherent power and power relations within and across different commons regimes.

However, the most severe challenges to the mainstream approach on commons are from anti-capitalist perspectives. Three key challenges have been identified. First, the commons approach can be problematic without a critical understanding of historical roots and the current anti-globalisation movements in the commons from a new institutionalism approach. Second, capitalism cannot change its unsustainable mode of production towards commons regimes at the whole system scale. Finally, from a holistic vision and from an ecosocialist/ecofeminist perspective, de-alienation is a 'gendered' interpretation of Marxist alienation, grounded in people's social movements and

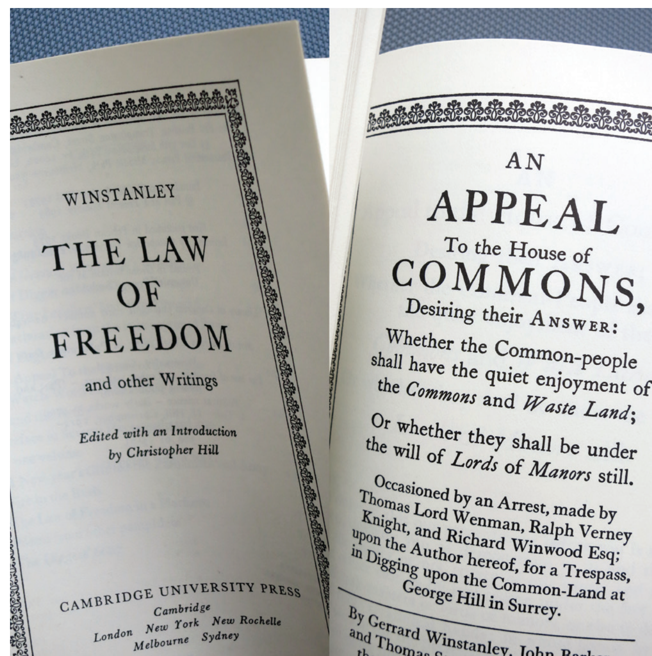
rebuilding the commons represents a new people-centred politics to take control over the resources that are crucial to humans, while keeping harmonious relationship with our nature.

Given the significance of the commons at this particular moment of history, the notion of a commons food regime is created in the absence of consensus on whether we have entered a new food regime among current food regimes scholars. The notion of 'growing a commons food regime' indicates a shift from 'a tool of hindsight' of the current food regimes theory, helping us to understand the rules and institutions in the global capitalist food system, towards 'a tool of insight', aiming to move from a passive conceptualisation to actively being engaged in the transformation of our current food regime. To deepen our understanding of a specific kind of commons food regime and find the core that connects and unites a myriad of discourses, disciplines, organisations and movements working broadly in the politics of food, I propose the idea that care is the core of a commons food regime, as care represents an 'attitude', an 'orientation' and a worldview – a way of relating to other associated values, as well as a recognition of our intersubjectivity. I endeavour to encompass a wide range of concepts and ideas on care, politically, economically, culturally, ethically, and metaphysically. My construction of care covers associated core values such as democracy, justice, diversity, co-existence and aesthetics, towards multiple finalities of care-receivers, ranging from humans, society, life, ecology, history and the world.

With this elaborated idea of care, I am in a better position to develop 'a tool of insight' – a broad conceptual map – by constructing an integrative framework for growing a commons food regime. The integrative framework is depicted within three nested zones, representing the broader context, a commons food regime, and its internal commoning dynamics (with five key elements, i.e. institutions, participation, networks, collaboration, and learning) and commoning outcomes and evaluation.

As an academic-activist, I have my own vision and values of how we live in the world, but I am also committed to being open-minded enough to be challenged from rather different perspectives and ready to embrace new ideas and ways of doing things. Indeed, we human beings are both 'products' of our own systems and at the same time also the designers of a new system (a regime). As Boyle (cited in Ferguson, 2009:71) puts it, "There is only one history of importance and it is the history of what you once believed in and the history of what you came to believe in." As a way of concluding this chapter, I would like to assert that growing a commons food regime is like entering a new epoch of history, as the beginning of history is lived and made through our production of the commons, with care as the core, towards sustainable food systems and ultimately the real world sustainability as a whole.

Chapter 3:
How Can We Grow a Commons Food Regime by Learning from Community Food Initiatives in London?



"England is not a free people, till the poor that have no land, have a free allowance to dig and labour the commons".

"For freedom is the man that will turn the world upside down, therefore no wonder he hath enemies".

Gerrard Winstanley

3.1 Introduction: from theory to practice

> *Theory is 'not for itself'. A theory is exactly like a box of tools…It must be useful. It must function. And not for itself. If no one uses it, beginning with the theoretical himself (who then ceases to be a theoretical), then the theory is worthless or the moment is inappropriate (Deleuze, 1977:208, cited in Foucault and Deleuze, 1977).*

As Deleuze asserts, any theory is never for itself, but must be useful, and function. A theory must relate to its surrounding (the individual and collective human beings and the context). It must work, taking the complexity of the context into account. Constructing an integrative framework for growing a commons food regime aims to provide a broad conceptual map – 'a tool of insight' – that can help build an adaptive and transformative capacity for improving commoning dynamics and commoning outcomes in growing a commons food regime in a complex world. As argued in the previous chapter, growing a commons food regime requires strategic planning, which starts with an understanding of the general context where a regime is situated (e.g. Ostrom 2007, 2009, 2011; Armitage, 2008; Poteete et al., 2010; Armitage and Plummer, 2010). This chapter outlines the current landscape of community food initiatives in London as a way of exploring this general context. By exploring their objectives, capacity, challenges, opportunities, and strategies in relation to growing a commons food regime, as well as the level of awareness of the commons by the initiatives, the investigation was aimed at exploring how we can grow a commons food regime, by learning from community food initiatives in London.

The investigation was based solely in London. Although London is not the only UK city that has seen a surge of interest in food and agriculture, a number of factors made it a promising site for growing a commons food regime. Firstly, the city is central to the recent debates on UK food security and sustainable urban food systems. (e.g. London Development Agency, 2006, 2007; London Organising Committee of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG), 2009; London Assembly, Planning and House Committee, 2010; Making Local Food Work, 2011).

Secondly, cities in particular have emerged as a strategic arena of the 'new food equation' (Morgan and Sonnion, 2010), characterised by increased government attention to, and involvement in, the food system. This has led to the development of global urban food strategies (ibid). London is well known for its diversity of urban food movements and grassroots initiatives (Steel, 2008), which arguably have a critical impact on developing more progressive food systems.

Thirdly, London has witnessed the remarkable growth and prominence of community organising and community alliances. These command significant support and influence in the capital and attract broad attention across the UK (Wills, 2012). There are currently many different kinds of food-based community projects, organisations, and networks. In particular, there is a genuine enthusiasm for food and farming issues at a community level. Quasi-commons characteristics (e.g. Transition Town Network's focus on community-led collective actions to respond to environmental issues; gift economy and community land trust, etc.), and problems (including freeriding, conflicts, and sustainability of many kinds of resources) can be witnessed at times. These existing commons, both those surviving from the past (e.g. allotments and the Diggers

movement) and those newly cultivated (e.g. urban commons), point to the revolutionary past and new possibilities for the future.

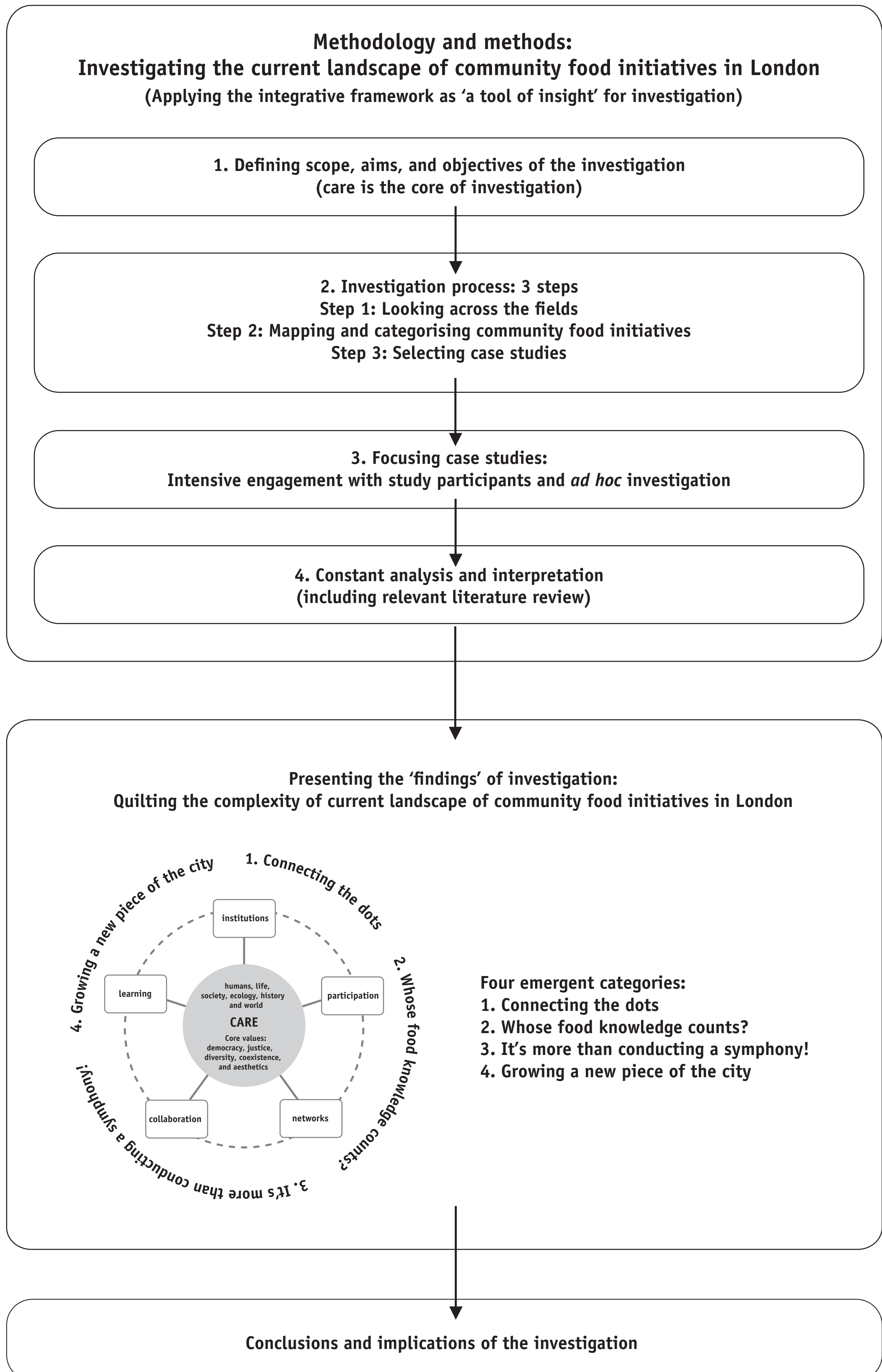
Fourthly, as a global city characterised by a plurality of food cultures and attitudes, London is a site for attracting, developing, exchanging and learning ideas, being able to have on the spot knowledge of initiatives and networks of progressive advancements. Thus, the choice of London represents a vision as well as my commitment to facilitating, mobilising and integrating different forms of knowledge from both North and South.

Fifthly, focusing on London also relates to a methodological issue. My on-going involvement on the ground had provided me with helpful information and networks. Compared to other research methods as well as previous research, ethnographic investigation can make a significant contribution to understanding organisational complexity and how people think, feel and act in different community food initiatives. The priority was given, over time, to deep and intimate engagement, which can only be fulfilled by focusing on the city I live in.

Finally, although I have already had access to many available resources in terms of people, organisations and information in London, I was also aware that it required better identification, coordination and/or reconfiguration of some hidden and ignored resources to increase London's potential to grow a commons food regime.

This chapter is organised in the following sections (Figure 3.1). The first section (3.2) focuses on the most suitable methodology for investigating the current landscape of community food initiatives in London. Applying the integrative framework as 'a tool of insight', I will outline the scope, aims and objectives of investigation. I will then document the step-by-step account of the investigation process as well as methods used along with each stage of the process. In the following section (3.3), a more creative and innovative way of presenting the findings is proposed as an attempt to better capture the complex landscape investigated. The metaphor of a patchwork quilt is adopted to illustrate its connectivity and interrelationships between the parts and the whole in their ever evolving dynamics. I will describe four emergent categories with titles – 'Connecting the dots', 'Whose food knowledge counts?', 'It's more than conducting a symphony!', and 'Growing a new piece of the city'. Although these titles have helped me organise my analysis and interpretation of materials generated, it is important to note that these four emergent categories are not mutually exclusive and should be seen as a complex whole. By bringing back the integrative framework, the chapter concludes with a discussion of implications and opportunities for growing a commons food regime in London.

Figure 3.1: Organisation of Chapter 3
How can we grow a commons food regime more effectively by learning from community food initiatives in London?



3.2 Methodology and methods

3.2.1 Scope, aims and objectives of investigation

Scope of investigation

The investigation was designed as a small-scale study. As mentioned, growing a commons food regime requires strategic planning, which starts with an understanding of the general context where a regime is to be 'grown' (Ostrom, 2007, 2009, 2011; Armitage, 2008; Poteete et al., 2010; Armitage and Plummer, 2010). As Figure 3.2 illustrates, the general context of this research was to focus on the level of local communities in London. The scope of investigation of the current landscape of community food initiatives was to explore the general context – being aware of the objectives, capacity, challenges, opportunities and strategies in relation to growing a commons food regime and the level of awareness of the commons. This investigation was not to provide either a comprehensive or a representative survey of the current landscape as a whole. Nor was it to focus on any particular community food initiatives. Rather, the investigation had a specific purpose which was to explore how we can grow a commons food regime by learning from a wide range of community food initiatives in London.

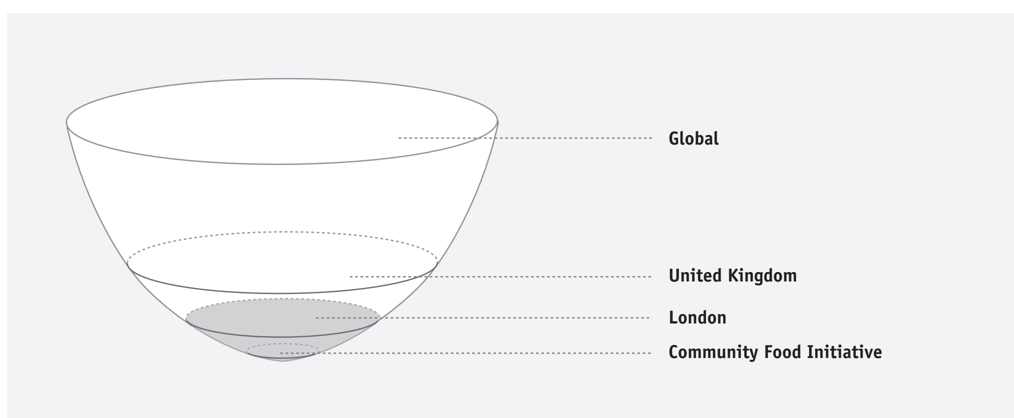


Figure 3.2 Community food initiatives as the general context > also see p. 87-88

Defining community food initiatives

> *"Commons and communities are two sides of the same coin" (De Angelis, 2005:10).*

The notion of community food initiatives has roots in community studies. The word 'community' in the notion of community food initiatives refers to two broad definitions offered by Kusenbach (2008) and Taylor (2003). Kusenbach (2008) identifies three basic components dominating the use of the term of community: (1) the presence of a shared territory (i.e. all the people in a certain local area); (2) strong social ties (i.e. networks of people); and (3) meaningful social interaction. Similarly, Taylor (2003) also suggests three general senses of 'community': (1) descriptive community (a group of people who share something in common or interact with each other); (2) normative community (community as a place where solidarity, participation and coherence are found); and (3) instrumental community (community as an agent acting to maintain or change its circumstances, or the location or orientation of services and policies). The categories of

community offered by Kusenbach and Taylor are not necessarily place-bound, but can be brought together by common interest, spirit and resources.

Although the concept of community has been criticised by some scholars (e.g. Pink, 2008) as an ambiguous and subjective analytical category for describing social formation, I do not find the term useless. We have to be cautious that the community is never homogeneous nor without divergent interests and needs. Similarly, although the essential locality of commons is often prioritised, the limits of the local should not be ignored. Commons must be understood, as Johnston puts it, "as relational and multi-scaled, while simultaneously rooted in community modes of regulation that prioritise solidarity, participation and pleasure" (Johnston, 2003:29). He highlights the importance of keeping the conceptual framework that a commons is rooted in, but can go beyond its territory, just like natural commons that can cross-boundaries.

For the purpose of this study, 'community food initiatives' were defined as any kind of agri-food related initiatives run by communities, which exhibited some level of collective action, self-organisation, and self-governance for shared resources (the commons). This more fluid and dynamic definition of community food initiatives was created with the hope that it would help community groups, scholars, officials and citizens to understand their potential in the development of sustainable food systems, sustainable communities, and, in so doing, would also help promote the concept of 'a commons food regime'. Although a commons food regime can be grown on a larger scale, it is recognised that very large resources are less likely to be self-organised (Poteete et al., 2010:239). Thus, this study was focused on smaller scale initiatives. While these initiatives can be place-based over a long period of time, they can also be one-off event-based initiatives. Examples include allotments, community gardens, food co-operatives, community social enterprises, community food movement organisations and campaigning groups, information networks and event-based community actions. These initiatives may not have all the elements of growing a commons food regime I have constructed. However, investigating the current landscape of community food initiatives in London can arguably shed new light on how we can grow such a regime there.

Care is the core of investigation

From the outset of the investigation, I was aware that this was not a typical evaluative research with measures and indicators. As argued in the previous chapter, rather than imposing the outsider's point of view, a more participatory and bottom-up approach (e.g. Smit and Wandell, 2006) for evaluating commoning dynamics and commoning outcomes was proposed. However, since the research scope was so broad, it was not possible to design a fully participatory research project. The concept of care was thus particularly important here. If we advocate that care is the core of growing a commons food regime, my investigation itself, then, should be reasonably undertaken as a caring practice. Care not only provided me with a much needed human touch throughout my investigation but also guided me in developing more appropriate aims and objectives in this matter.

Aims of investigation

Bearing in mind a caring attitude, three key aims of the investigation were to:

1. Understand and evaluate commoning dynamics and commoning outcomes of community food initiatives related to growing a commons food regime in London
2. Explore the level of awareness of the commons among community food initiatives in London
3. Obtain better understanding of how we can grow a commons food regime in London

Objectives of investigation

1. To understand and evaluate commoning dynamics and commoning outcomes related to growing a commons food regime in London through selected case studies of community food initiatives and intensive engagement with study participants

2. To begin to communicate with community food initiatives about the commons, including exploring what they knew about the commons and whether or not they considered the commons relevant to their work
3. To identify implications and opportunities for growing a commons food regime by learning from the investigation

3.2.2 Investigating process

To achieve these objectives, the investigation was divided into three major stages with different methods. It is important to be reminded that these three stages were not neatly divided; instead, there were iterative circles involved. Nevertheless, for the sake of communication, these three stages are as follows.

The first stage: looking across the fields

As Lorimer (2003) suggests, the act of walking offers a sensitive approach to the relations between experiences and our surroundings. As a foreign student, I was not constrained within certain norms and expectations. People did not feel threatened by me because I was willing to build up rapport or relationship at their pace. I was looking for something to add to my mind and my basket but at the same time I was also consciously sowing new seeds, whether seeds of wild plants or seeds of ideas. I had to decide how I should deal with my harvest, whether I should preserve it for the future or share it with others. I was grading their strengths and weaknesses and trying to understand how we could work together in a different context. An experienced forager once reminded me, “London is ripe with bushes and trees just waiting to be harvested”. I felt myself like a forager walking in the urban landscape of London from one community to another.

In this regard, multi-sited ethnography is compatible with the purpose of this stage of the research, which works better in accommodating simultaneous processes in different connected places. As Marcus (2011:19) puts it: “The habit or impulse of multi-sited research is to see subjects as differently constituted, …but to see them in development – displaced, recombined, hybrid in the once popular idiom, alternatively imagined”. I was particularly drawn to his emphasis on “multiple agents in varying contexts or places, so

that ethnography must be strategically conceived to represent this sort of multiplicity, and to specify both intended and unintended consequences in a network of complex connections between a system of places" (Marcus, 1998:52). The sites visited were initially guided by my previous engagement in community food sectors but gradually via a number of well-connected networks throughout the research.

This approach complemented my specific objective to develop a sense of how different sites function individually, and connect collectively. It also encouraged me to think strategically about why some sites should be treated as more significant than others. Furthermore, in recent years, multi-sited ethnography has tended not only to 'follow' a range of evolving networks and organisations, but to build upon our understanding of how and under what conditions strategic collaborations between researchers and informants can emerge from the fieldwork (Marcus, 2011:21-23). Marcus (ibid:28) states, "In some inquiries, fieldwork is not simply a schedule of interviews but is very often stage managing in collaboration with connected events of dialogue and independent inquiries around them".

During this stage of investigation, I either took part in the event or was a volunteer in various places, from urban agriculture sites to community kitchens, to institutional meetings or an open day. I observed and participated in a range of everyday practices and activities. In that capacity, I kept a diary of what I saw and what I heard people say in passing when we were working together, be it planting, weeding or cooking. I kept notes of things that struck me as curious. For example, someone told me she never crossed the Thames, as she belonged to South London. I realised that the north/south divide was not only on the global scale but also took place in London.

The second stage: mapping and categorising community food initiatives

During the second stage of the investigation, an initial mapping exercise was undertaken to identify and describe community food initiatives in London. However, as Dowler and Caraher (2003) assert, 'local food projects' are hard to categorise, due to their wide scope and heterogonous character. They have a variety of institutional and organisational arrangements. More importantly, while food projects share similarities with other community activities, thanks to the nature of food, it is a more complicated issue for individuals, households and communities than promoting cycling or stop-smoking groups. Food is both private and public and an essential part of our everyday life. Indeed, in the complex world that food is part of, I encountered enormous difficulty in categorisation. There was overlapping between different categories and some community food initiatives can be placed in more than one category. Nevertheless for the purpose of providing a useful reference point for further detailed conversation, I divided all sites visited into six categories based on my interpretation of the mapping exercise. This enabled me to classify and sort what is otherwise a relatively large and varied grouping of community food initiatives. The six categories included: (1) community self-help (charitable) food initiatives; (2) community food enterprises; (3) campaigning groups; (4) networks; (5) event-based initiatives; and (6) universities.

The third stage: selecting case studies

While through 'looking across the fields' I was able to see a wide range of community food initiatives, as I mentioned earlier, the aim of this investigation was not to offer a comprehensive or representative survey of the current landscape as a whole. Instead,

it was set up to explore how we can grow a commons food regime more effectively by learning from community food initiatives in London. I aimed to gain a deeper understanding of their objectives, capacity, challenges, opportunities and strategies related to growing a commons food regime in London through selected case studies.

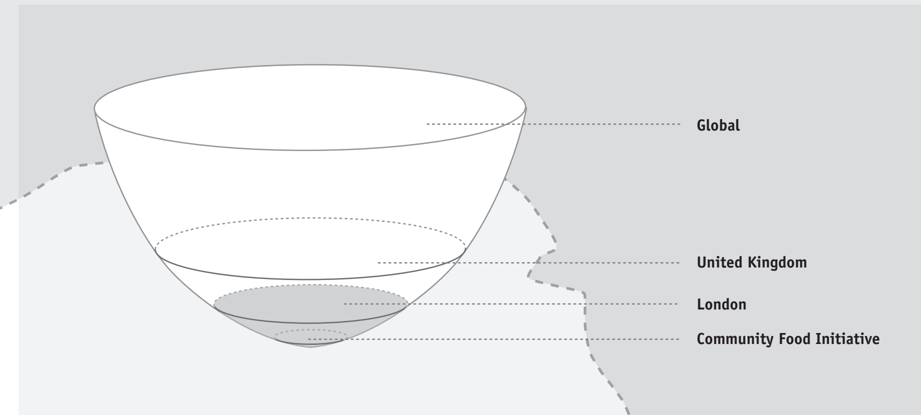
The **map 3.1**[1] illustrates all the 53 sites visited with 20 case studies marked in different colours under each category of community food initiatives. Three selection criteria were adopted for the case studies as follows:

- Selected initiatives must exhibit some elements of commoning dynamics (i.e. care, institutions, participation, networks, collaboration, and learning) constructed with the integrative framework. The strength and uniqueness of those elements were also considered.
- At least one initiative from the six categories of community food initiatives presented above in each category.
- The diversity of their connections (e.g. food supply chain, food education, food policy involvement) with food and community action (e.g. community development, public health, poverty reduction, marginalised population, etc.).

From the mapping exercise, I then selected and focused on 20 case studies. Table 3.1 is the list of selected case studies with selection criteria.

(1) The map should be read with a number of considerations. First, it aimed to illustrate a general sense of the location of the community food initiatives I visited and investigated. Second, since this is not a web-based digital map, it can only record the specific time frame of the investigation period (2008-2010). Third, the bigger size and diffused colour effect of the dots were given to those 20 case studies to make them more visible on the map. In addition to indicating their location, this decision also aimed to communicate the idea that these 20 case studies might have greater influence on growing a commons food regime in London, as well as being living entities (can be growing or declining illustrated through diffused colour effects). Finally, a small map on the top-right side to illustrate the distribution of those community food initiatives visited without any categorisation.

Map 3.1: Investigating the current landscape of community food initiatives in London



All uncategorised community food initiatives engaged during the investigation

UCL

Community Self-help Food Initiatives

1. Abundance Project
2. Blenheim Gardens Edible Estate
3. Brockwell Park Community Greenhouse
4. Calthorpe Project
5. Food-up-front
6. Hackney Community Composting Support
7. Hare Krishna, King's Cross
8. Kew Bridge Eco Village
9. Manor Gardens
10. Meanwhile Garden
11. Spa Hill allotment
12. Spitalfields City Farm
13. The London Orchard Project

Community Food Enterprises

1. Alara wholefoods Community Garden
2. Bonnington Café
3. FoodCycle
4. Greenwich Co-operative Development Agency
5. Growing Communities
6. OrganicLea
7. People's Kitchen
8. People's Supermarket
9. Pimlico Farmers' Market
10. Portabello Food Market
11. Urban Bees (multi-sited)

Campaigning Groups

1. Capital Growth
2. Community Land Trust London
3. Friends of Earth
4. Gaia Foundation, London
5. Jamie Oliver's School Meal Campaign
6. Queen's Market (Friends of Queen's Market)
7. Reclaim the Fields / Grow Heathrow
8. Transition Town Brixton
9. UK Food Sovereignty Movement
10. Women's Environmental Network

Networks

1. Camden Shares
2. Good Food Partnership (Camden)
3. Green Drinks London
4. London Food Link
5. Royal society of Horticulture
6. Slow Food London (Slow Food on Campus)
7. South London Vegan Society
8. The Hub King's Cross

Event-based Initiatives

1. A day without money
2. Feed the 5000!
3. Guerrilla Gardening (Camden)
4. Invisible Food
5. The Big Lunch, Peckham
6. The Dinner Exchange

University

1. Birkbeck
2. City University
3. LSE
4. SOAS Food Studies

Notes: The coloured titles and the bigger dots on the map represent the 20 in-depth cases studies of community food initiatives in London. Multi-sited community food initiative is not shown on this map.

Category	Name of initiatives	Selection criteria
I. Community self-help (charitable) food initiatives	The Calthorpe Project	Community food growing site, food and environmental education, multiculturalism, youth development, collective actions for protecting public green spaces in the inner city
	Hare Krishna, King's Cross	Faith group, concerning the homeless and people in need, vegetarianism, making use of food waste
	Spa Hill Allotment	Inherited historical tradition of allotment culture and politics, collective actions for protecting urban green spaces, horticulture practices
II. Community Food Enterprises	Bonnington Café	Squatter origin, workers' co-op, food hub, vegetarianism, self-organisation for improving neighbourhood and place-making for a sense of community
	FoodCycle	Food waste, food education, concerning marginalised population, capacity building/volunteering/leadership programme
	Greenwich Cooperative Development Agency	Advocacy for co-operative development, food co-ops, educational and training programme, public policy engagement in co-operatives and alternative economies
	Growing Communities	CSA (Community Supported Agriculture), organic farmers' market, box scheme, food zones, apprenticeship programme, patch farm cultivation; this model has been scaled up and scaled out to other communities
	Organiclea	Workers' cooperative, peri-urban food production, historical heritage, participatory oriented place-making; permaculture principles; reclaiming the fields; progressive community development (e.g. reskilling, tackling food deserts issues, especially for low income households, etc.); partnership with Hornbean Café (serving as a food hub)
III. Campaigning Groups	Capital Growth	Urban scale for community food growing, policy involvement, capacity building programme, tied with London Olympics
	Friends of Queen's Market	Self-organised campaigning initiative for protecting traditional food markets against local council's planning proposal
	Transition Town Brixton	First Transition Initiative in London, a grassroots community development to tackle pressing issues such as climate change and peak oil through a holistic approach linking food with other urban systems (e.g. the local currency – Brixton Pound, alternative energy systems)
	UK Food Sovereignty Movement	An informal alliance of producers and consumers, NGOs and campaigning groups, dealing with the challenges to promote and realise a radical alternative for global food systems
	Women's Environmental Network	Gender-focused campaigning networks, with a vision to make the connections between women's health and well-being and environmental issues
IV. Networks	London Food Link	A network of over 250 London-based organisations and individuals focused on sustainable food in London
	Good Food Partnership	A partnership between local government and community groups; cross sector network and advisory body for Camden's food system, including strategies and implementations
	Slow Food London	A network to bring people together to create change through Slow Food initiatives for food culture, biodiversity and educational programme

V. Event-based Initiatives	Feeding the 5000!	A coalition of FareShare, FoodCycle, Love Food Hate Waste and Friends of the Earth to raise awareness of food waste issues; high profile event
	Guerrilla Gardening	Neighbourhood and community cohesion and inclusion, beautification, food cultivation and urban environmental management; reclaiming public spaces
	The Big Lunch, Peckham	A belief that the world can be a better place through people working together, with nature, optimism and common sense
VI. University	SOAS Food Studies	An interdisciplinary centre; a hub for knowledge exchange and information sharing in the field of food studies

Table 3.1 List of selected case studies with selection criteria

3.2.3 Focusing on case studies

From the beginning of the research I sought to generate materials rather than collect data. The notion of 'generating materials' refers to a position challenging "the activity of doing research and its implicit distribution of energies, in which the researcher does all the acting while the researched are merely acted upon" (Whatmore, 2003:91). The implication of this statement is therefore that they should be 'working together'.

A case study is a useful way to employ a mixture of research methods for generating material (Yin, 2009). This case study approach was particularly appropriate for developing strategies for future practice due to its exploratory and evaluative perspectives in research on the commons (Poteete et al., 2010:34-35). This approach is supported by a large survey on the food issues census across UK civil society. Many participants in this survey offered feedback that the survey method was not appropriate due to inflexibility of survey design, not enough space for important answers, no questions able to reveal organisational complexity and the diverse range of activities they work on (Food Ethics Council, 2011). I did not strive for a one-dimensional picture but followed the notion of knowledge pluralism that different perspectives may exist on the same reality. I spent long hours with each initiative in order to familiarise myself with their working patterns and people (e.g. staff, volunteers, users). Having said all this, I did not aim to achieve a totality of understanding and evaluation of each individual community food initiative.

Once again, since the main purpose of investigating the current landscape of community food initiatives was to help me understand the general context and strategic planning for growing a commons food regime more effectively, it is important to mention that the focus of these case studies was not only to explore the views representing each initiative. Through intensive engagement with these selected initiatives and study participants, I also aimed to explore as many ideas and practices as possible regarding challenges, opportunities, and strategies related to growing a commons food regime in London. Therefore, unsurprisingly, some of the study participants' views expressed during the investigation might not necessarily represent those community initiatives where I met those participants and then invited them to join the investigation.

In terms of finding study participants, I made a short list of selection criteria. I had two ways of finding study participants. First, I explored the work of these case studies through interviews with multi-stakeholders within these initiatives, including key staff, organisational partnerships and volunteers. I tried to maintain a balance of gender, ethnicity, educational and professional backgrounds and age. Second, while I understood

that food professionals and environmentally-aware citizens might have a stronger impact on promoting the idea of a commons food regime, I also wanted to widen the diversity of study participants. Therefore, I had ‘informal’ conversations with people whom I met *ad hoc* whenever and wherever I could. This was because I did not want to lose any opportunity to engage with a diversity of people. In addition to these ongoing informal conversations with different people throughout my investigation period, I conducted interviews with 47 study participants (see Table 3.2).

Category	Name of initiatives	Study participants
I. Community self-help (charitable) food initiatives	The Calthorpe Project	1 environmental worker 1 volunteer
	Hare Krishna, King’s Cross	1 coordinator 1 volunteer
	Spa Hill Allotment	1 site manager 2 spot holders
II. Community Food Enterprises	Bonnington Café	1 chef 1 neighbour customer
	FoodCycle	1 project leader (volunteer) 1 event volunteer
	Greenwich Cooperative Development Agency	1 officer 1 member
	Growing Communities	1 project leader 1 apprentice
	Organiclea	1 cooperative worker 1 outreach worker 1 volunteer
III. Campaigning Groups	Capital Growth	1 officer 1 volunteer
	Friends of Queen’s Market	1 campaigner 1 food vendor at the market
	Transition Town Brixton	1 environmentalist (core team member) 1 member in food group 1 member at energy group
	UK Food Sovereignty Movement	1 movement organiser 2 members
	Women’s Environmental Network	1 site coordinator 1 member 1 volunteer
IV. Networks	London Food Link	1 network coordinator 2 members
	Good Food Partnership	1 network coordinator 1 member
	Slow Food London	1 manager 1 member
V. Event-based Initiatives	Feeding the 5000!	1 event organiser 1 volunteer 1 event participant
	Guerrilla Gardening	1 event organiser 1 event participant
	The Big Lunch, Peckham	1 event organiser 1 volunteer
VI. University	SOAS Food Studies	2 members

Table 3.2 List of study participants

The integrative framework served as 'a tool of insight' for the investigation. While I have identified the key elements and associated components of commoning dynamics in the framework, there is a need to further explain how I understand and evaluate them. As mentioned earlier, care played a significant role during this investigation. Through caring about these community food initiatives and people around them, I also cared that one day a commons food regime might be grown in London. Oriented by strategic planning in the integrative framework and inspired by the Food Ethics Council (2011), I considered five exploratory questions were significant for informed priority-setting. These were:

A. Objectives (what do they want to achieve?)
B. Capacity (what has been done already?)
C. What are challenges and opportunities for change?
D. What are the strategies to copy with challenges and make good use of opportunities for change?
E. Evaluation (what worked and what didn't?)

In other words, I used these five exploratory questions to evaluate the key elements of commoning dynamics with associated individual components (see Table 3.3). It is important to note that these elements and components were not presented as variables and indicators. Rather, they were taken as a set of conceptual and analytical tools to inspire me to see and understand those community food initiatives in a more systemic way. Thus, it is important to be flexible to apply those exploratory questions to those key elements of commoning dynamics and components that were more relevant to different initiatives and those study participants.

Key elements	Components	Questions
Care	Care receivers (humans, society, life, ecology, history, and the world)	A. Objectives B. Capacity C. Challenges and opportunities D. Strategies E. Evaluation
	Core values (democracy, justice, diversity, coexistence, aesthetics)	
Institutions	Forms of institutions (regulative, normative, cognitive-cultural institutions)	
	Levels of institutions (operational, collective action, constitutional)	
	Ideological divides and unity (piecemeal reform, progressive, radical)	
Participation	Feature of participation (cosmetic, capacity building, citizen control)	
	Power relation of participation (forms, levels and spaces)	
	Food consumerism vs. food citizenship (sustainable consumption to progressive citizenship)	

Networks	Structure of network (density, centralisation, heterogeneity)	
	Multi-level and multi-layer interactions (vertical, horizontal, across sectors/systems)	
	Relational/hybrid/co-existing food networks (Global/local, nature/culture, markets/movement, place/space, humans/non-humans	
Collaboration	Motivations (Self-interest, mutual/symbiosis, super symbiosis)	
	Collaborative mechanisms (design approaches, strategies and processes)	
	Collaborative impacts (single effects to virtuous circles)	
Learning	Types of learning (multi-loop and multi-level learning)	
	Perspectives of knowledge (production, dissemination, utilisation)	
	Transformative learning and knowing (democratisation of knowledge and citizen-led innovations)	

Table 3.3 Key elements of commoning dynamics with components and exploratory questions

In this regard, during the interviews, I started by asking some simple questions at a very general and tentative level. I then added some sensitive and political questions such as their relationships with other organisations and initiatives, their vision of London's food system, community development, and the thoughts about their own initiatives, challenges they encountered and opportunities and strategies they identified. I deliberately kept my interviews flexible to allow for differences between the initiatives and kept the discussions relatively open. The monologues I encouraged at the beginning of each conversation with participants seemed to put them at ease, reassuring them that I was genuinely interested in whatever they wanted to say and piquing their interest in the topic. I asked questions to which my study participants responded, but then relinquished control by asking, "Do you have anything to add?" or "Do you want to ask me something instead?" I considered this was a small way to illustrate my willingness and commitment to learning, collaborating and caring about them.

This research approach resulted in two outcomes that a traditional approach would not have done. First, those initiatives and study participants felt cared for and encouraged to share their wisdom and living experiences; they were likely to do their best to help me understand the complexity of the current landscape of community food initiatives. Second, they also said they had benefited from the exchange of views and experiences with me and gradually a relationship or friendship was established beyond the investigation which, in many cases, continued to the time of writing this thesis.

3.2.4 Constant analysis and interpretation

Having access to various initiatives, events and organised activities allowed me to act as a bridge between different communities during the period of investigation. My frequent and intensive engagement and interactions with them positively brought together each other's awareness of the key learning arising from the situations and also helped me

build capacity for future interventions. This effective collaboration was therefore central to the entire investigation, but especially useful for the analysis and interpretation of material generated. In many instances, I offered my study participants an opportunity to rethink the content of our conversations and interviews afterwards and invited them to join me in the creation of the investigation in some ways. In so doing, I aimed to achieve some degree of the art of power-sharing gestures and continued to build up collaborative relationships.

Rather than a quantification, standardization and generalization of the findings, the qualitative nature of the research strategy values contextual understanding, social interactions, and diversity of people's experiences, perspectives and perceptions and interpretations. More specifically, for the investigation, I have employed an inductive, interpretative qualitative research strategy. The massive amount of material generated from interviews and my own observations at each case study was analysed and interpreted through constant coding and categorising.

To have a fuller understanding of some specific issues I also compared material generated with relevant literature. I considered it important to show how I have engaged with the existing literature and how this has challenged my previous assumptions and/or helped me explore theories and practices which were unfamiliar prior to my fieldwork. This approach is "explicitly acknowledging any literature that has influenced the research process or its interpretation *as it is encountered* in the process" (Fisher and Phelps, 2006:157, original emphasis). More importantly, in my view, this way of engaging both literature and empirical investigation has been an integral part of my academic-activist identity, constantly reflecting, thinking and acting.

3.2.5 Research limitations

Due to the nature of the research, there are a number of limitations which must be considered. First, my prior research experiences heavily influenced the methodology adopted in this thesis. While multi-sited ethnography methodology has enabled me to obtain a rich and complex understanding of the current landscape of community food initiatives and their relevance to practising a commons food regime in London, it demanded a high commitment in terms of time, energy and emotional intensity. Despite the fact that this research was not designed as a standard participatory action research, I encountered many of the difficulties usually associated with participatory approaches. Throughout the research process I struggled to move between different identities: part PhD student, part community food activist, part volunteering worker and/or a local resident. A number of occasions resulted in conflicts among the needs of the communities I was working with and the pressures from the university in fulfilling different academic requirements.

Second, though in-depth investigation of a relatively large number of 20 case studies was conducted, findings from the qualitative research approach are not representative of all the community food initiatives in London as a whole.

Third, there was geographical bias, where most of the community food initiatives were in North London. This was partly due to accessibility and previous networks and the selected case studies are similar to others across South London. However, further

research is required to explore whether the emergent categories discussed in this chapter are more broadly relevant to other initiatives.

Fourth, in the last few years, the rapidly changing development of the community landscape of food and farming has made this research particularly challenging in terms of keeping up to date with a huge range of actors, networks, activities, organisations and policies. Although analysing archival records and carrying out media and food policy analysis would no doubt have been fruitful, it was beyond the scope of this research project, due to time restrictions and the priority given to direct engagement with these communities.

Finally, admittedly, there is the inevitable bias that comes about through personal preferences and decisions in terms of choice of sites visited, case studies and study participants. For example, there were relatively more case studies chosen from social movement/campaigning groups. This was in part influenced by my own academic-activist identity. In contrast, only one university department (SOAS Food Studies) was selected as this particular case consisted of multi-dimensional functionalities including an academic community, a student-led community garden and a student-led food buying cooperative. I am convinced, however, that the selection is based on sound methods and that they represent significance beyond the specifications of their own circumstances and it should provide a useful reference and understanding of the current landscape of community food initiatives in London.

3.3 Quilting the complexity of the current landscape of community food initiatives in London

Although I cannot claim that the participants I interviewed were representative of the entire current landscape of community food initiatives, from my investigation, it seemed to illustrate the fact that most people I talked to were really self-reflective, critical, and constructive. It is clearly obvious that they revealed to me their living experiences, visions and values, something about how they came up with new ideas and common wisdom as well as their disappointment and frustration. I was impressed by these qualitative details and the inspiring learning points these study participants shared with me. From the materials generated through my intensive engagement with these communities and people around them, I definitely felt there was a strong sense of getting involved collectively and collaboratively, in the struggle to secure a better future and the pleasure we find in being part of it.

At the time of writing up the 'findings' of my investigation into the complexity of the current landscape of community food initiatives in London, one metaphor emerged as the privileged motif in my construction of such complexity – the metaphor of making a patchwork quilt. I consider quilting an appropriate approach because a quilt can only be fully appreciated as a whole, yet in constructing the quilt, attention must also be paid to each patchwork, each stitch and each step in the process. Unlike a discovery occurring with an 'aha' moment in some scientific inquiry, it has been a slow process, involving bringing together many pieces of materials, fabric, types of knowledge, and ideas from other quilters, a process of ethical and aesthetic decision-making. I have endeavoured to stitch together and juxtapose my analysis and interpretation to be more inclusive, responsive, and human. What I was looking for was a method that could allow me to put together many elements to form a well-constructed, quilt-like whole, so they could be more rhetorically effective and compelling, creating an account that is aesthetically as well as intellectually satisfying.

In general, I have allied to a feminist constructivist epistemology (Keller and Longino, 1996), and quilting, as a constructed artifact, emphasizes 'making' and 'crafting' and a more holistic and less reductionist perspective, favouring an epistemology that asks questions about process and relationship (Namenwirth, 1986). As Flannery (2001) convincingly argues, traditionally, quilting has a connotation of communal collaboration. This communal aspect of quilting points to the role of practice and values. Donnell (1990) even suggests a quilt with its implications of love, caring, warmth and inclusiveness. A quilt is a kind of collective artwork composed of numerous materials, which allows me to experiment within a wide range of these and invite readers to actively join the investigation and my analysis and interpretation. Additionally, in order to show some of the extraordinarily vivid conversations in which people openly and often movingly tell of their own lives and their views, instead of only extracting the briefest of quotations from this rich mine of information, in some instances, I decided to give longer and richer extracts, conveying something of the flavour of their testimonies more fully.

In what follows, four emergent categories were identified with titles – 'Connecting the dots', 'Whose food knowledge counts?', 'It's more than conducting a symphony!', and 'Growing a new piece of the city'. Although these four titles have helped me organise my analysis and interpretation of materials generated, they were not mutually exclusive

and should be seen as a complex whole. We cannot adequately understand the form by breaking it down to their smallest parts and then adding relationships back. It is important to mention, here, that when we ignore the relations, the whole, and focus only on separate parts, we might run risk of all sorts of misunderstanding of the landscape. At the end of this section, I will present the final quilt of the complexity of the current landscape of community food initiatives in London.

3.3.1 Connecting the dots

> *We are not short of like-minded people, ideas, resources…once again, this is London… there are already many good things happening…what we need is to connect these 'isolated dots'…There are millions of ways of connecting the dots…like an organic system in nature, full of conscious and unconscious relations, networks, and symbiotic processes…but these things must be taught and learnt, and renewed, continuously (A worker at Organiclea).*

My investigation confirmed that London as a global city is well-recognised, rich in resources and opportunities, and yet lacking a systemic joining up of the 'isolated dots' mentioned above. In this section, I will present the first emergent category – 'connecting the dots' from my fieldwork. I have organised this section in a way which suggests the idea of 'connecting the dots', starting from localised food systems, wider urban systems, then connecting nature, culture, and communities, and ending up by connecting to history and the world. Finally, I discuss how these connections have evolved over time and describe some of the issues concerned with building a more strategic and co-ordinated approach to creating more desirable outcomes.

Connecting food systems

Many participants in the selected case studies often expressed an urgent need to connect the entire food supply chain and to develop a more localised food system in London. Three recurring themes will be discussed in terms of connecting food systems: first, connecting producers and consumers; second, tackling the issue of food waste; and third, connecting knowledge and learning in transforming urban food systems.

First, in terms of connecting producers and consumers, the work of some initiatives focused on food access and affordability in fresh produce especially in deprived areas of London (e.g. the Calthorpe Project, Greenwich Cooperative Development Agency and Women's Environmental Network). For others, this need was due to the fact that London lacks food security, depending on imported food and the dominance of big supermarket chains. For example, Growing Communities and Organiclea are more strategic and pragmatic in taking up the challenge of local food. They indicated that there are major opportunities for developing integrative local food systems, by connecting producers, consumers, as well as the public and private groups and the third sector may be seen as part of their solution. Opportunities include the current food policy. Food seems to be an important element in many peoples' lives and, for some, this acts as a motivator in taking community action. Concerns over health, food quality, social and ecological impacts, and the pressing financial crisis, seemed to lead individuals to take control of our food systems.

And yet people were fully aware of all sorts of difficulties on the way to long-term development, including the viability of small-scale farming, particularly in peri-urban areas; the culture of cheap, convenient food; the central importance of land-ownership and land-use; the need for appropriate skills; and the lack of a common language or discourse around the urban food system. In addition, there is a fast growth in farmers' markets, box schemes, food co-ops, collective buying, food in public sectors, including hospitals and school meals, and a myriad of food hubs are reviving the tradition of public markets as places for coming together and providing locally grown produce. It is interesting to see that while Capital Growth as a coordinator of a large number of food growing projects also played an important role in facilitating discussions about and activities in the re-localisation of London food systems, there was no serious increase of food production from its programme.

Another key feature among some of these initiatives studied was their special attention to tackling food waste issues. A lot of the work on food waste in London has pointed the finger at food manufacturers and retailers, particularly large supermarkets (e.g. Stuart, 2009). A study undertaken in 2009 estimated the amount of food waste as 8.3 million tonnes a year, representing 22% of all food and drink bought in the UK (WRAP, 2009). Through my investigation, it became clear that some of the participating initiatives were addressing food waste issues in different ways. The impetus for change was thought to come from below, so that the motivation and drive for a more sustainable food system came from the general public rather than from government circles, or from the private sector. Such engagement can also go some way in helping the production of new, community-driven social norms. For example, 'Feeding the 5000!', a flagship annual event aiming at raising awareness of the pressing issue of food waste, was established by the social enterprise FoodCycle to innovatively re-distribute food waste from supermarkets for helping members of the community who were in need. Hare Krishna also cooks this 'wasted food' and serves it in public as a more spiritual perspective of sharing and caring for food and people. However, it is important to note that visions and practices originated from below do not justify a lack of support from the government. For some initiatives, the government should play a facilitator role to develop a more coherent planning system. All these issues around waste management do not get addressed in the literature on alternative food networks, where the main focus is on the relationship between production and consumption (e.g. Goodman et al., 2012).

The third key feature of these community initiatives is the genuine interest in building up practical support where knowledge and experiences can be shared and exchanged. There has been a lot of effort to this particular end, through a series of training workshops, seminars, conferences and professional mentoring programmes (e.g. Growing Community and Organiclea's apprenticeship), and more purposeful networking and matchmaking of enquiries with support and advice as well as blogs, e-newsletters and occasionally printed magazine (e.g. Capital Growth, London Food Link and Greenwich Cooperative Development Agency). However, there is a clear recognition that a better mechanism was required to systematically capture the diversity of knowledge and wealth of learning across London. Also, it is worth mentioning that the connection between university and these community initiatives was quite limited in that it lacked a strategy for a meaningful and integrative knowledge system for urban food systems. Thus one participant at the Spa Hill Allotment argued that:

> *Every university should have an agriculture department and what they should be doing is experiment with proper control about what techniques work and what don't…there*

is so much kind of knowledge out there but it is scattered and it needs to be collected in some clear form…to give it a scientific base to take it forward (A plot holder at Spa Hill Allotment).

This point about knowledge systems will be discussed in more detail in the section below and in the second theme of 'whose food knowledge counts?' However, while there was a strong interest and many saw the importance of connecting food systems in London, there were limited examples of successful integration of any scale. The intensity and diversity of linkages need to increase, and many barriers such as cultural, economic and political commitment and capacity should be further addressed. This brings us to the next theme: connecting to wider urban systems.

Connecting wider urban systems

A number of the study participants clearly expressed that unless food systems were well connected with wider urban systems, we could never in the long run have the significant impacts to transform London's food systems. There are three aspects of interest here: discovering best practice; the ambivalent relationships with local government and issues about urban governance in London.

First, international examples of 'best practice', in terms of innovative and progressive urban food experiments, were largely ignored across different initiatives and research participants. Many had not heard of closed-loop short supply chains such as the agro-industry systems and urban food policy experiments to be found in cities such as Toronto, New York, and Rome.

However, unsurprisingly, there were a few exceptions: people involved with Capital Growth, UK Food Sovereignty Movement, Women's Environmental Network, and SOAS Food Studies were relatively more familiar with some of the best practice around the world. Furthermore, some best practice seemed to be transplanted without critically addressing the specific political and socio-economic contexts. For example, Cuba's experience has been taken by Transition Town Brixton (and Transition Town Networks in general) as an inspiring model for a low-carbon post-capitalist society to envision a holistic urban system where energy, transportation, local economy, health and education are integrated on an urban scale. However, the reason the Cuban experiment with urban agriculture worked was that community empowerment was facilitated by a major input from the top, yet this point was rarely made in the Transition movement.

Second, within every conversation I heard among participants, another significant issue was the ambivalent relationship between some of these initiatives and local government. At the local level, the Greater London Authority comprises 33 local boroughs. Boroughs play a key role in London's food system, through the delivery of school meals, planning regulations, environmental health officers and through the 'nutrition' work of health agencies. For example, Capital Growth worked closely with all these 33 boroughs with mixed success. Moreover, the Good Food Partnership was a partnership between the London borough of Camden and local community groups to develop and implement a comprehensive local food strategy. The pioneering school meal project driven by Greenwich Cooperative Development Agency in the Borough of Greenwich was another example. However, there was also a reflexive account of the role that local councils have played in the implementation of Transition Initiatives. For example, in discussing

the importance of working closely with the council, a Transition Town Brixton member explained:

> *It's our strategic plan to work closely with Lambeth. We have to, even though we are aware of the potential to be co-opted. But, you can't imagine all those drawbacks and limit yourselves to engage with them [local authority]…Lambeth is very supportive and now even proposed to become a co-operative council. I think it's a good move, at least opening up spaces for business NOT as usual. London is a living laboratory, welcoming all sorts of experiments...we can definitely start with a borough and see how different systems worked well or not…I think, another important point is that, we could teach Lambeth that they must not over rely on us for change…but change must also happen within its own institution.*

Elsewhere, Friends of Queen's Market saw themselves directly in confrontation with local councils in terms of conflicting visions of development and urban regeneration narratives. One volunteer for Friends of Queen's Market expressed the contradictory policies within Newham council:

> *Government sometimes are quite funny…like London Olympics promotes itself as the greenest and most sustainable Olympics and see what we've got in their food supply – McDonald is one of their biggest suppliers. Likewise, Newham council keeps talking about sustainable food, local food, healthy diets, that kind of stuff, but look what they try to do, demolishing this traditional food market, this is the most important place where local people find their home here…food quality, diversity and freshness, and all at an affordable price. It's really a same old story, thinking old markets are dirty, not trendy, and symbol of poverty, but they [the council] just don't get it how lucky we still have this kind of market in London.*

Finally, some participants mentioned that while it is too early to assess the outcomes of their endeavours to build a more localised and sustainable food system, it is clear that broad changes in the mode of governance and urban planning are necessary. As Morgan and Sonnino (2010) rightly point out, despite the Mayor of London aspiring to create a new food system for the city, it lacked power and resources to fulfil such an ambition. Similarly, for many participants in my work, they talked about city level interventions which have been limited to a few large projects, aimed at supporting and building capacity for local level activities, which won't have much impact. For others, they seemed to look for a more radical model for urban governance. For example, a volunteer at Organiclea thought that the London food project was as much about restructuring social and spatial relationships as it was about reforming production and economic systems. Such a project is not new, though incorporation of food production into urban social and economic systems may seem novel concepts to contemporary planners. The volunteer even raised the question of whether it would be better for urban communities to adopt Ebenezer Howard's (1965) methods of appropriating common land for productive means and creating small self-sufficient communities in the existing urban fabric without adopting the spatial design of Garden Cities.

Connecting to nature, culture and communities

Beyond urban governance, many conversations I had with my research participants showed their concerns with urban inhabitants' relationships with nature, culture and communities manifested in our food practices. First, there were a number of accounts of

learning and sharing knowledge and skills about plants and gardening, the use of leisure, recreation time, and the healthy lifestyle it provided, a variety of benefits for children and youth; or simply thinking about eating as a kind of 'an agricultural act' (Wendell, 1992). These might all stem from a desire to reconnect themselves to nature, especially in a world that had become urbanised. Many particularly thought our food practices were much related to our alienation from nature, although they did not specifically use the word 'alienation'. Evidence to support this interpretation includes these statements:

> *Out of sight is out of mind…they are consequences but I don't have to deal with them…So it's not an issue for me, is it? London is away from the land for far too long…whereas people in some cities in developing countries might still see the connection between their livelihood and the land, this insight has almost entirely vanished here. If we aren't doing something, farmers are going to end in tears in about 50 years (A Transition Town Brixton member).*

> *Although London is quite green, our vision of nature is however quite static with everything in order, under control and grounded in certain aesthetic principles…If you look at those big parks you would know what I mean…it doesn't allow for spontaneity and messy experiment (A guerrilla gardening participant).*

> *No doubt, our understanding of nature is largely influenced by capitalism, all done to economic terms…funny people think if they can afford water or gas or whatsoever, why shouldn't they use water, gas, etc. as much as they want to…we think we human beings are clever and are entitled to control all resources, we are superior to other species and for me, that is so wrong (A Women's Environmental Network worker).*

Second, this alienation from nature, for some, also implied a concern with our disconnection from food. For example, at Organiclea and Women's Environmental Network, those interviewed talked about how we must learn how to reveal experiences in everyday life that are often missed or forgotten, including the ingredients and processes that can be easily overlooked in our food. Many participants in my research remarked that the food culture and conversations about how food has and continues to shape our lives and institutions seemed to be missing. Food is one of the most fundamental parts of our existence and our relationship with food across the whole cycle is reflective of our broader relationships and institutions in society. This is particularly the case with participants at the Slow Food London. They considered the real and potential 'expressions' of food. They discussed how to encourage people to search for intimacy and interdependence with all kinds of food around us. Food, some thought, allowed us to capture local knowledge and public imaginings about the evolving identity over time of the neighbourhood and surrounding area, recognising that richer experiences can emerge from the dynamic interactions with food. Some participants believed it is essential to encourage people to become active actors in their consciousness of food, embracing ideas of conviviality and exchange to foster social accountability and enhance communities through empirical observation, sensory awareness and intuitive imagining.

Third, in some instances, a key element in preventing alienation from nature and disconnection with culture was to see how to rebuild communities. For many, urban food growing can be even treated as a case study to help answer an even bigger question: the redefinition of governance as an institutional interface between communities and resources, and ultimately between people and nature, and a dynamic

process in rebuilding a more sustainable human environment. In particular, after the failure of the state and the market to control this process, the third option, that is to say the community, has now become an attractive area to explore. However, it is important not to romanticise this communal perspective, as many people pointed out the structural challenges to building a living community in London. These challenges included structural problems such as a 'lack of a sense of community'; 'competition with other priorities in our lives (job, family, personal preference); and class, race, and social contexts.

For instance, according to a member of Transition Town Brixton, cultural conflicts arose within the multicultural neighbourhood due to the repeated waves of immigrants changing the character of life in Brixton. Street Scene's Africans, Caribbeans, Irish, Asian, and new young white professionals view each other with suspicion, debate religious and social values, but nevertheless, somehow co-exist on the same block. They constitute a community, despite their differences. There were apparently uneasy compromises that enabled life to continue in a multiracial neighbourhood. Spending time in various 'communities', I had more direct experience in understanding the emotional investments various people make in having their own 'place' in this evolving community. However, occasionally, I found that one or two participants mentioned a more holistic view, emphasising the wholeness of food, blurring the boundary of nature, culture and community.

> *We have to explore warm relationships and community stewardship which are the two keys to determine our relationships with food…nature and culture are not separate concepts, but are shaping and shaped by each other, and communities are like a container for creating new realities. Farming is a cycle, you know, from nothing to something and to our body and to nature, perhaps to our soil again. It's a cycle, that we all should know…If people know that, they probably will love each other and their community more (A plot holder at Spa Hill Allotment).*

In a sense, given the above quote, our attentiveness to nature, culture and communities, was a way to understand our humanity and something greater than ourselves. It was a guide to allow us to fit in and grow with others and other living beings. As a renewal of our relationship with the natural world and cultural diversity, our passion to reunite with the ground, could give us, perhaps, a moment of religion, of being bound together in something greater than ourselves in what is now a secular world, an escape from what many feel to be the emptiness and loneliness that the individual senses coming to live in the city.

Connecting to history and the world

Some participants mentioned our short memory of what was happening in the past and its relevance to the present. They invited people to connect with the histories and patterns that a given place revealed. For example, although allotments are not an entirely urban phenomenon, they are one of the most dominant forms of urban agriculture in the UK. Works from geographers and historians (Crouch and Ward, 2003; Burchardt, 2002) have shown that there is a continuous struggle, first by the landless seeking a plot and then between plot holders and 'the authorities' to create and maintain allotments spaces. These scholars raise questions about socio-economic and political structures, food production and consumption and the peculiar lifestyle and identity of allotment holders. In addition, through the lens of this mixed cultural landscape, Crouch

and Ward (2003) deal with the meaning and interpretation of the cultivation of the land, from which arose a nostalgic feeling for a lost rural life, a lost pastoral setting, set against the feeling of being out of place and alienated in urban life.

The importance of connecting the old and the new emerged from my dialogues with participants in different initiatives. People at Spa Hill Allotment and Calthorpe Project talked about their earlier struggles for self-organisation and collective actions, confronting the local authorities, and difficulties in working with allotment plot holders or local residents. Bonnington Café and Greenwich Cooperative Development Agency mentioned the challenges faced by the development of cooperatives. In addition, Organiclea was proud of their commitment to preserving and revitalising Hawkwood as a local treasure in the eyes of those who knew its previous life and work. However, while they tended to make a point that we are made by history, so we must learn from history, their narrow focus lay largely on the history of their own initiatives and very few participants were aware of the similar challenges shared by other initiatives across London. Despite this, some have begun to reflect on this issue:

> *Londoners, I mean, as far as I know, to a large extent, are quite inward looking…I'm not joking that some people never go out of their neighbourhoods in all their life, or people say they never cross the River Thames…and yet this is a city of immigrants... but very few are genuinely interested in other people's lives or what's happening in the world, I would say no, no, most people just don't care, or put it this way, they don't have time to care…but if we want to do things better, we must care about what most people don't (A member at Women's Environmental Network).*

Second, as I discussed earlier, although the international experiences of food and agriculture in other cities were largely ignored, some initiatives made special efforts to highlight London's strategic role as a world city to engage with wider food movements or social and environmental movements. For example, the UK Food Sovereignty and Women's Environmental Network believed London to be well positioned to link with both 'protest politics' – resistance to displacement and dispossession through gentrification, industrial development, privatisation of natural resources, squats, homeless and rights to the city – and 'identity politics' – gender, class, race, religion, youth and small farmers. For some, it is important to re-politicise mainstream food discourses. Some informants even pointed out the fact that activists must be careful with the modest embrace of multiculturalism and women's rights within food movements, which might be capitalism's compromise with its fundamental challenge of class divisions. However, despite this sharp analysis, these people also explicitly admitted that it would be much harder to win public support for the class issue, given that they were themselves mostly from a middle class background. Instead, they considered perhaps a softer angle for political action more appropriate:

> *We have to be more pragmatic about how things can be done. We've been engaging for quite a while with those critical debates like land grabs, GM Food, new Green Revolution; someone must challenge these big issues…demonstrations in front of FAO, entering the House of Commons…but we also have to find better ways to communicate with the general public…it's a class issue, these days, it's easier to talk about gays, women's equality, but not class division…but you don't want to put people off by saying that (A member at UK Food Sovereignty Movement).*

Third, through connection to history and the world, some informants were explicitly political in their attempt to emphasise the importance of north and south solidarity. For example, while UK Food Sovereignty Movement, Organiclea and Women's Environmental Network endeavoured to attach themselves to global peasants' movements and to challenge our current unsustainable food systems, a few members at Transition Town Brixton frequently mentioned their sympathy for the Occupy Movement, both in London and elsewhere. In addition, Friends of Queen's Market drew a portrait of their struggle, not as a peculiar case in urban regeneration discourse, but a universal trend across different cities under the neoliberal paradigm. In summary, it is clear that they emphasized how important it is for all of us to get to know one another in depth. Taking the time to understand other people's unique histories would generate compassion for each other's personal and communal struggles and vulnerabilities. For some, such empathetic familiarity might safeguard the movement from being divided, conquered, and destroyed. Unlike more dogmatic fighting during earlier progressive political movements, mutual trust and respect, caring, love and compassion were frequently cited by my informants. For them, this new approach extended to fellow human beings who seemed to promise a better chance to unite people in their struggle to transform London's food systems, and to build truly sustainable communities or global struggles for social justice and ecological integrity.

Concluding remarks

To conclude, I discuss three dimensions related to all the connections presented in this section. First, it is clear to see that connections have evolved through self-organisation and purposeful interventions and the combinations of these two forms. While acknowledging that it is neither possible nor desirable to fully 'control' the development of these connections, many participants highlighted the urgent need to develop a more comprehensive and systemic mechanism to connect the dots. Given that we have never had to deal with problems on the scale facing today's globally interconnected society, some participants were also aware that we cannot rely on a single solution as no one knows for sure what will work, so it is important to build a system that can evolve and adapt rapidly. Second, though some community food initiatives seemed to be satisfied with their own limited world, for many, they expressed the importance of cross-boundary interactions, multi-level linkages, bridging organisations, and vertical-horizontal alliances. Finally, one of the key reasons for connecting the dots is to allow groups of stakeholders to come together and devise rules for how to use specific resources. But for this to happen, these groups and individuals need to have a shared understanding and knowledge of how the social and natural systems work, as well as some degree of consensus about the resource problem (Ostrom, 1990, 2005). Important questions must be raised: What understanding of challenges and opportunities of food systems exist in the community? What counts as valid knowledge and whose knowledge counts and how is such understanding produced, maintained, shared and learned? These issues will be the focus of the second emergent category from my investigation, which will be discussed in the next section.

3.3.2 Whose food knowledge counts?

> *At one level, to ask '**whose food knowledge counts?**' is a political question. But at another, it also concerns about what kind of knowledge we need and why and how, so much is related to what a life we want to live really (A PhD student at SOAS Food Studies).*

During my fieldwork the words 'knowledge', 'learning', 'knowing' and 'sharing knowledge or learning' appeared in almost every conversation I had. From an early stage, I also noticed that the word 'knowledge' was used in different contexts, with different definitions and for different reasons. Some of those taking part in my study indicated selective claims to knowledge and demonstrated that the concept of it is one of plurality. In what follows, I begin with a discussion of what counts as food knowledge, and then move to introduce two dimensions of 'whose food knowledge counts': first, 'He who pays the piper calls the tune' dealing with agenda-setting of knowledge production; second, 'matters of trust and care' revealing what role trust and care played in food knowledge, not only as an abstract concept but as a practical and moral matter. Finally, I will discuss what values underpinned suggested by participants as being good 'knowledge governance'.

What counts as food knowledge?

Before we can discuss whose food knowledge counts, we have to first consider what counts as food knowledge. I acknowledge that there are many ways of slicing the idea of 'knowledge' and problems associated with any over-simplified distinctions. Most knowledge in the real world is a combination of many forms. However, in order to capture what was significant, I discuss three perspectives of food knowledge revealed from my investigation: first, from a disciplinary perspective; second, the contribution from food activism; and third, the complex web of food knowledge.

First, from a disciplinary perspective, 'food studies', as an umbrella term, covers a wide range of disciplinary, conceptual and methodological paradigms both within and across disciplines. As a fast growing intellectual and academic field, 'food studies' includes food culture and food systems in their broadest sense, exploring the ways individuals, communities, and societies relate to food within social, political, economic, cultural and historical contexts. For the last four years, I have met hundreds of researchers and students working on food in one way or another at community food initiatives and other occasions in London.

Food Policy at City University and SOAS Food Studies are two institutions which act as hubs within and beyond academia. While the former has strong links with public health, nutrition and active involvement in London food policy, as well as NGOs such as Sustain, which is itself a key hub for organisations working on food and farming, the latter is a hub for knowledge exchange and experience sharing through conferences, seminars, lectures, and fostering collaborative research. In addition, a postgraduate module of 'Urban Agriculture', provided by my own department at UCL, the Development Planning Unit is aimed at integration of conceptual and practical understanding of urban agriculture, from an interdisciplinary and international perspective. However, one intriguing aspect was that very few students had formal agricultural degrees, let alone academic training related to agriculture in urban spaces despite the current popularity of urban agriculture in London. While for some, this is

a worrying sign as they thought food productivity should be increased to challenge London's food insecurity, for others, London's food production is only one part of the complex situation, and many strands of knowledge do not necessarily have to come from academia.

Second, food activism has also contributed to an important part of food knowledge in London. It is important to note that not all participants regarded themselves as activists. This is based on my own interpretation given that, to a large extent, the initiatives and research participants represented an attempt to put forward an 'alternative' understanding and practice of relationship to food. I find Jamison's (2003) work on the contribution from activism in the making of green knowledge useful. Thus, I borrow the same four 'ideal-typical' categories of activism – community, professional, militant, and personal – to capture some distinct characteristics of food knowledge generated by these community food initiatives. Community and professional food activism considered a secular, instrumental orientation, aimed at changing policies and political actions and privileged factual and scientific knowledge production. Militant and personal food activism focused on changing people's beliefs and value systems and tended to favour normative and moral philosophy.

More specifically, one of the major differences between community and professional food activism is that the former has a more amateur, temporal, and popular approach, and the latter is more professional and permanent as their career. On the other hand, the distinction between militant and personal, was made to highlight the fundamental contrast between those who advocated and promoted a new kind of morality and ethics in public, and those who did it more privately. While local or lay knowledge reserved and produced by Spa Hill Allotment, Transition Town Brixton, Friends' of Queen's Market and guerrilla gardening networks were examples of community food activism, Greenwich Cooperative Development Agency, Capital Growth, Women's Environmental Network and UK Food Sovereignty Movement tended to win a broader public interest in food issues and sometimes served as agenda-setter and formulated strategies and policies from local, to a national and international scale. Slow Food London and Hare Krishna were two initiatives that belonged more likely to a militant category, advocating alternative moral and spiritual perspectives. However, most participants interviewed were found to be personal food 'activists' practising their own moral and ethical principles and reluctant to preach or impose their own ideas on others.

Of course these four categories are not mutually exclusive and in fact, the picture revealed from my empirical investigation suggested an even more complex and fluid state than Jamison's (2003). Initiatives such as Growing Communities, Organiclea and FoodCycle were derived from community food activism, but since they were established as a community food enterprise, they shared many of professional attributes as well. For instance, the concept of 'Food Zones' (Figure 3.2) developed by Growing Communities, estimates that urban agriculture in London could only meet approximately 2.5% of the demand for food in London. Thus, instead of focusing solely on the production of food in London, it used trade to link sustainable production and consumption within and beyond London's spatial boundaries. Another example, Organiclea has developed an inclusive and participatory design process, for gaining collective knowledge on land survey, organisational infrastructure and translating vision into practice. These concepts and methods have been known and shared by some but only adopted in a few other community initiatives I investigated (e.g. Transition Town Brixton and Good Food Partnership).

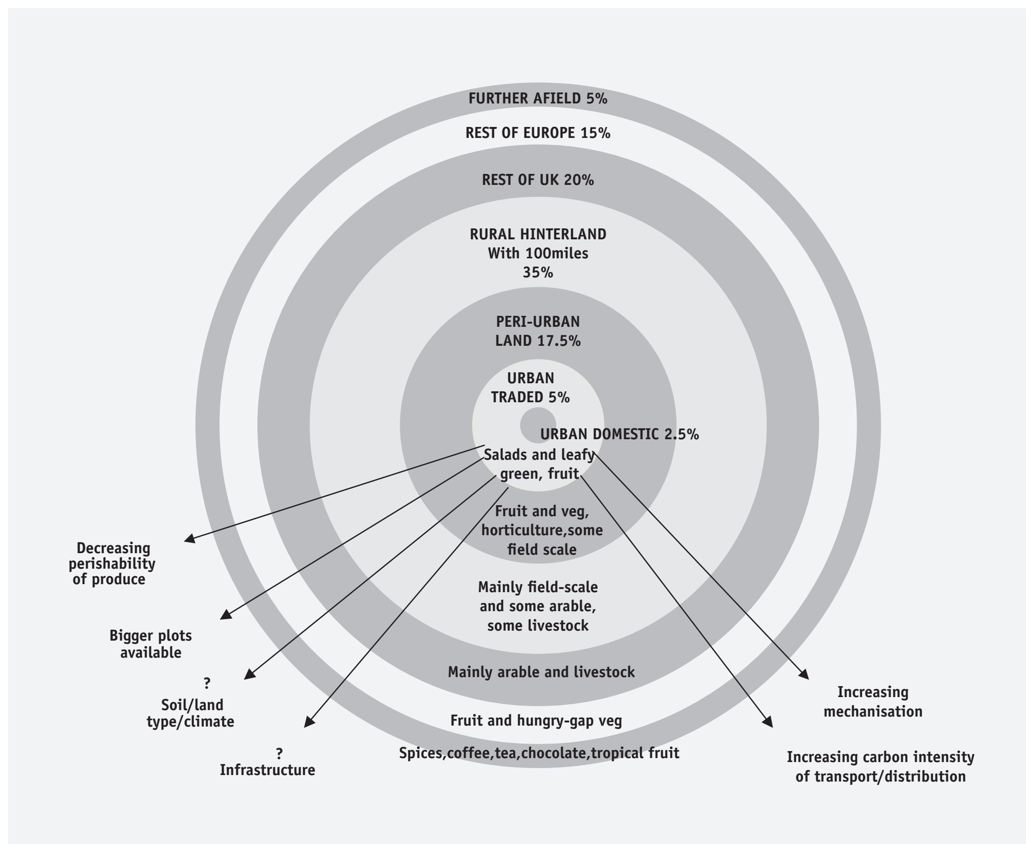


Figure 3.3 Food Zones (adapted from Growing Communities, 2011)[1]

Although Capital Growth and UK Food Sovereignty Movement exhibited typical attributes of conventional and professional NGOs, due to their networked and coalition infrastructure, their long-term development and permanence were still unclear. Moreover, actual boundaries that marked secular and spiritual divisions between community/professional and militant/personal also became blurred and problematic. For example, both Transition Town Brixton and Slow Food London put equal emphasis on scientific arguments and moral, aesthetic and spiritual sentiments. Many participants interviewed were not only concerned about food knowledge, such as food culture and food systems, but also addressed how to recognise the importance of a broader scope and incorporate more diverse forms and sources of knowledge.

This leads to the third perspective of food knowledge. For some, it was problematic in our higher education that the knowledge produced from the universities was not always useful for communities. They would know more about practical knowledge than theories. Others questioned the role of 'popular knowledge' in the current local food in London. For example, how could or should we judge or make good use of those celebrity chefs such as Jamie Oliver, in their contribution to knowledge. Still many emphasised the importance of broadening our ways and sites of learning. Additionally, there was concern about a kind of 'tacit knowledge', coming from communities working together observing and imitating each other, drawing in apprentices, to further this unspoken knowledge about the world. As one participant said, "you can't get it unless you are doing it and learning it at the same time". Additionally, some participants stated that a huge amount of food knowledge was specifically tied with immigrants, even mythical knowledge in London should not be ignored.

(1) See http://www.growingcommunities.org/start-ups/what-is-gc/manifesto-feeding-cities/explore-food-zones/

It was interesting to note that quite a few participants talked about the infinity and openness of knowledge around food. There was an echo of Freire's call for "openness to approaching and being approached, to questioning and being questioned, to agreeing and disagreeing" (Freire, 1998:119). One study participant from the Bonnington Café even tried to recall a quote marked on the Wall outside the British Library to support his argument when he was asked about what he understood about food knowledge. He assumed that knowledge is infinite – no one can know everything, nor can one always be right so it is important to broaden our scope of inquiry to critically embrace other dimensions of an open orientation to ourselves, others and the wider world. He commented:

> *No one can know everything. The other day I passed the British Library, I saw a big banner saying that knowledge is of two kinds: we know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information on it…If you ask me what food knowledge is, I would say it's like a complex web, well, perhaps a web is not the best word to describe it…a sort of web in motion, like a wiki where people can add on new stuff and have a forum to discuss things…we need to learn how to get knowledge we need….but at the same time, we also need to learn to be critical about all kinds of knowledge as the world is undergoing constant change…It's about care of fellow human beings as well as our commitment to them, and always willing to learn new ways of understanding the world.*

However, another participant emphasised that food knowledge was different in that it is something people eat. Thus, food knowledge exemplified a kind of embodied and intimate knowledge through our body. She said:

> *Food is different, you can discuss a topic on a virtual space but you can't smell, touch and eat it…food knowledge is a bit like that, people must feel real in their mouth and that it's trustworthy to put it into your mouth…To learn knowledge about food is also to learn how to take care of ourselves and others, from the basic act of eating food, growing food and sharing food (A member at Women's Environmental Network).*

So far, I have discussed three perspectives of what counts as food knowledge raised from my empirical investigation. Although participants in the discussion asserted that the statement 'whose food knowledge counts?' broadly reflected their own work and concerns, two important themes stood out. First, for some, they put more emphasis on the imbalance of power in the food system as well as our knowledge system, and they expressed this with the phrase 'He who pays the piper calls the tune'. Second, for others, it seemed to be a matter of trust and care, which was not only seen as an abstract concept but as a practical and moral issue.

He who pays the piper calls the tune?

From time to time, I could hear study participants talking about the significance of the person who sets the agenda for 'appropriate' and 'necessary' food knowledge. For some, what was needed was a 'sustained' conversation about what we should know and what to prioritise in research and development in agro-food related issues. Many participants, especially those from campaigning groups and academia, considered this kind of conversation a significant but achievable challenge. However, they were also aware that this was only going to be realized if their narratives could catch everyone's attention and people were able to focus on the fundamental questions, as one member at UK Food

Sovereignty Movement, rightly pointed out: "Where does food come from? How is it produced and by whom? How do its production, delivery and consumption affect us and other people? Who makes choices for us? Who controls the food system – from seed to sewer?"

Pursuing many of the issues mentioned above would demand long-lasting support from government and grant providers. It is clear that there was a cynical but also worrying tone expressed by certain participants, especially towards large corporations and technological enterprises, as well as the government food policy and strategy from the national to the local scale. Many participants explicitly opposed the idea of technological fixes and the biotechnology approach. While my investigation was done before the Conservative Coalition's election in May 2010, for some, those interviewed already expected a dramatic shift in the Government's food strategy. The fact that the Coalition's rise saw the disbandment of the Sustainable Development Commission, a more progressive national voice, represented only one of many examples of this shift. Others included the promotion of a sustainable growth strategy underpinned by sound scientific evidence, and calls for (1) building the green economy; (2) Big Society (i.e. giving people more responsibility and accountability for, though not necessarily power over, sustainable behaviour); and (3) encouragement of local and sustainable food procurement (assuming no cost increase). Here is an example of how a study participant explained "he who pays the piper calls the tune!'

> *These days, some progressive NGOs have been weakened by their dependence on government's funding. They tend to be a service provider rather than campaigner. This weakens any radicalism they might have had. The government is clever, they give you some projects to run and then you don't have time to do more fundamental research or they just don't give you any funding…what is most needed is what is the most difficult, that is, to get a grant…that's very sad (A volunteer at Organiclea).*

However, when I spoke with another participant, she offered me a different perspective on 'He who pays the piper sets the tune', which suggested citizen's rights of knowing and knowledge. There's an obvious imbalance of power in the making of food knowledge in current systems. According to her, it was a problem not limited to London. The absence of cross-sector research collaboration to set food policy as well as urban policy towards sustainability was yet another example of the need to deal with the problem for the sake of our future. As one participant at SOAS Food Studies shared:

> *I'm quite interested in Toronto's food council and Oaxaca's public assembly model…I think it's time to foster a grassroots food council with representation for a more inclusive and participatory research process…the point is that it's embedded in a local context, what is discussed is relevant to people's life…But it takes time to develop such an understanding and process…but I believe it is a valuable experiment…Communities in London, I think, are good places to start for people to learn to be engaged…This is challenging, especially at a time when we are seen as passive consumers rather than citizens…We need to engage with public policy, but we also have to be careful not to fall into government's policy rhetoric…One thing I find particularly important, perhaps because I'm an academic, is to have meaningful and purposeful social learning…what I mean by meaningful and purposeful learning is that we have clear objectives, and to clarify whose objectives, and how we are going to achieve these objectives, I mean, the process…we need to make ourselves clearly understood why community food sector matters, or how we can learn from each other.*

This view was supported by other participants. For some, it was a question of whether citizens were given priority over consumers; whether consumers really had sovereignty over their food choice and whether consumers really knew fully what they wanted to have. A couple of participants highlighted the urgency of exploring how we can move from individual to collective knowledge, empower communities by increasing their capacity to demand, conduct and evaluate any knowledge generated so that people have a voice and are fairly involved in the production, transfer, dissemination and utilisation of food knowledge. As both citizens and tax payers, one participant at Organiclea said, "shouldn't the piper be calling the tune?"

Matters of trust and care

Through my investigation, the saying "whose food knowledge counts?" also seemed to be related to matters of trust and care, which can be identified in three recurring themes: first, social capital and word of mouth; second, authority and morality; and third, beyond expert vs. lay knowledge divisions. First, my investigation lent support to the wider findings that social relations had significant roles in the ways knowledge was imparted and used. This was especially true when participants were overloaded by information, for example, where to buy fresher but less costly organic food, how to set up community garden initiatives and why a vegetarian diet is good for your body and mind as well as the planet. While I found that those community food initiatives committed to building their capacity in terms of knowledge and skills towards their goals or particular needs, 'who you know' was widespread among many initiatives. For some, social relations brought together what they knew, how they knew and why something was understood in certain ways. For most participants, trust and care were implied in their relationships to knowledgeable community members. These had expertise in a variety of knowledge and skills in food production, preparation, and health diet, food culture and rituals, or identifying which wild plants were edible in an urban forage tour.

However, they also show a slightly more nuanced picture in that the empirical materials showed some contradictions among participants' food knowledge. For example, while many were concerned about food safety issues and attention was paid to the labels on produce they consumed in the supermarkets, the quality of vegetable box schemes or farmers' markets, the same level of caution was absent when they decided to buy vegetable and fruits from a local 'one pound a bowl' stand or having free lunch at the Hare Krishna stall. This was in part due to economic considerations but also related to other factors such as supporting minorities, convenience, emotional and spiritual satisfaction, or simply holding a belief that these people were more 'honest' in their modest way.

Second, matters of trust and care revealed an interesting relationship between authority and morality in their requisition of their food knowledge. Both trust and care in processes of learning had been implied in many participant discussions such as the relationship between urban agriculture and sustainable agriculture, sustainable consumptions, public health and nutrition, and how these discourses circulated today and how they had been produced and reproduced over the past decades. These initiatives showed various attitudes towards 'authorities' of knowledge resources. Participants discussed their trust judgement based on criteria such as 'transparency', 'honesty', 'competency', 'care', 'credibility' and 'responsibility' etc. While some trusted more expert authorities such as academia, NGOs and watchdogs for their independence

and international networks, others pointed out that they were sometimes sceptical about so-called 'experts' since these institutions were not necessarily always independent and autonomous (as mentioned in the previous section 'He who pays the piper calls the tune'). These results were scarcely surprising given that 'authorities' were not distinct and opposing social actors, but part of a larger social system. Accordingly, trust and care in 'whose food knowledge counts' was better treated as a social mechanism embodied in structures of social relations influenced by participants' relatively subjective moral judgements.

Finally, arguably of greater importance to these varied moral judgments, my study also reflected a call for moving beyond the division between expert and lay knowledge. This seemed to resonate with the notion of food knowledge as a complex web as was discussed in the first section. For some, there was an element of pragmatism in that as long as the system worked, and fulfilled their needs, it was of no great matter whether it concerned adoption of permaculture design principles, raw food diets as a kind of alternative medical treatment, techniques for consensus building and improving team dynamics, or how to apply social marketing to improve funding raising activities, and developing a sustainable food enterprise. For others, I also noticed a tendency to think that many community groups held a view that most people can be an expert of some sort.

Most of the initiatives involved placed great emphasis on having a cross-boundary mechanism for broadening our recognition of different forms of knowledge and innovative ways of learning, as well as knowledge sharing and dissemination. Having said that, there were two outstanding issues on difficulties of knowledge production raised by some staff working on these initiatives: first, the constraint of limited time in investing in learning new knowledge and skills; and second, their desires to have 'endorsement' from academia or more well-reputed research institutions, either for evaluation of their work, enhancing public trust and media credibility or for their specific discourses such as anti-GM Food, small-farming revitalisation, and health benefits from a certain kind of food intake. One example from a campaigning group illustrates this well:

> *I do believe that power produces knowledge and vice versa...Struggle for knowledge is also struggle for power… When I think of whose food knowledge counts, I actually think of something like democracy and citizenship, or some more universal values…I suppose in our interactions with the world, we are all involved in the production of knowledge in some kind…who is lay and who is expert, the distinction is unnecessary to me, we are both lay and expert in some kind, I would think…I guess, we need knowledge that can give ideological support, enhance a certain value, like a new definition of democracy and justice, not only going to vote and no one really listens to you afterwards…'whose food knowledge counts' speaks about many things…It's important to have a space for people to come together to learn and to share, a kind of collective learning…through this process, we start to trust ourselves and others, well, you talk about care, and I think you pick up a good word…this trust is also like love and care as well, care for ourselves and care for others, we need this kind of space to practise…(A member of UK Food Sovereignty Movement.)*

Concluding remarks

To conclude, I reflect on four issues that arose from my investigation. First, it is clear from the empirical investigation that those taking part in these studies had a desire to share what they knew about food and farming whether it was about where our food come from, healthy eating habits, organic farming systems or the diversity of food culture and heritage. Before my fieldwork, the first time I heard about the saying, 'If they only knew', was from Guthman's (2008) article criticising the cultural politics within alternative food practices as un-reflexive.

Although I did have a few comments from interviews relating to this kind of un-reflexive and uncritical narratives, from my investigation, this frequently cited line 'If they only knew!' suggested a rather different instance. It was associated with the difficulty of learning about food knowledge. From my ongoing investigation and observation, I found most study participants were quite self-reflective, cautious and constructive and at times even quite self-critical about their statements. Those interviewed understood the contradictions and complexity of everyday life; they emphasised the importance of process rather than dogma, and they were open-minded to the potential of changes at different scales and levels.

Following this observation, my second reflection is that there is a need to have a better platform to allow knowledge contributions from community food initiatives and interested individuals to be heard, deliberated, shared and learned by a much wider audience, whether for pulling together a new narrative of positive solutions or impacting on food policy and strategy. This reflection leads to the third one: how we can develop value-laden knowledge governance. There are recurring questions such as for whom, for what purpose, and how knowledge is produced. In this sense, 'whose food knowledge counts' broadly reflects and reinforces as well the care for ourselves and for others and it is a capacity that we all need to learn. Finally, while recognising the importance of more inclusive forms of participation and collaborative ways of knowledge production, any kind of collaboration is never an easy enterprise. In the next section, we will discuss the challenges and opportunities of collaborative actions among community food initiatives in London.

3.3.3 It's more than conducting a symphony!

> *We can't really force people to collaborate with others… The point is that people have to see there's something for them, and someone must take the lead to make it happen…* ***It's more than conducting a symphony****…When conducting a symphony each person takes her part and together there is often a combined sound, there, you know what you have to play, you concentrate on our performance, here, you have to work out your own structure…it is the question to individuals coming together as individuals touching, looking, talking and caring for each other (A participant at the Big Lunch in Peckham).*

"It's more than conducting a symphony!" was a quote derived from a conversation with a participant during a Big Lunch event in Peckham. This event was a street party, in everyone's street, where people worked with neighbours who they didn't necessarily know, and people stopped what they were doing and sat down to share a lunch together. This scene reminded me of another event, 'Feeding the 5000!' at Trafalgar Square in

a snowy December, where people queued for a plate of steaming curry and a glass of icy fruit smoothie made from food that would otherwise have been thrown away by a supermarket. It was a complicated coordination endeavour in bridging multiple organisations into a shared ethos of campaigning for tackling the issue of waste food in London. Food events like these are only two small examples of people's ability to collaborate and create something larger than they would on their own.

All of the initiatives I visited and investigated expressed the importance of collaboration in different ways and for various reasons. Apart from those originally set up as food cooperatives (e.g. Bonnington Café, Organiclea, Greenwich Cooperative Development Agency), a myriad of examples of collaboration were also found through securing funding, endorsements, marshalling external resources, pooling volunteers, sharing facilities, supporting networks and greater connections among different sectors, carrying out new management practices, monitoring implementation, food education, campaigning, enacting new food policies and developing collaborative local food systems. Collaboration can have very broad aims (e.g. strategic planning for a particular food policy) as well as narrower and more specific goals (e.g. organising a food event such as 'The Big Lunch' and 'Feeding the 5000!'). However, even such one-off collaboration demands a huge amount of work and time.

Given that collaboration was clearly recognised and often mentioned among the community food initiatives investigated, this section looks at the third emergent category, of how participants in the study thought about collaboration, what they had already done, and more specifically, what were the key factors that would help or hinder collaboration leading to generating greater synergies in different situations. Although in the literature, the terms 'collaboration' and 'cooperation' may have slightly different meanings, for the purpose of presenting the findings, these two words are used interchangeably to refer to the situation in which people work together to some purpose. The next section, 'You can't force collaboration', highlights the voluntary spirit of collaboration. I first present three key attributes of collaboration. I then focus on barriers to collaboration but also indicate a number of pathways to overcome these difficulties. 'Are we talking about the same thing' discusses the importance of clarity, relevance and framing for effective communication; 'God/devil is in the details' points to the interplay between design and emergence, and the necessity of attention paid to the processes; 'Transforming challenges into opportunities' introduces these two sides of the same coin and shows how they help us to cope with uncertainties and manage complexities. To conclude, in 'Creating virtuous circles', I discuss insights gained from the fieldwork undertaken, which show how great things can be done by a series of small things brought together.

You can't force collaboration

I would like to start this section with a quote from an experienced community leader I met at an annual event organised by the Women's Environmental Network. Her evaluation of the situation was compelling as it raised some significant issues for most of the community food initiatives I investigated, and also for those interested in community work in general. These include: 1) seeing a kind of decentralised and networked structure within and across these initiatives; 2) understanding that most likely no one can force anyone to do anything is a given fact that we must realise, as real change comes from within; 3) striking a good balance between authority, autonomy and interdependence to foster meaningful collaboration.

> *You can't force collaboration but you can have an environment that stimulates it. In a collaborative project, a vision is held up, and people discuss things and make suggestions to others, or through a series of consensus-building exercises in decision-making, but no one can force anyone to do anything…perhaps within an organisation you can have top-down decisions, but even then we must be careful not allow it to become too bureaucratic and fanatical with rules and procedures…and, definitely not in a situation when you want to work with other communities, you can't do that. What's all voluntary and crucial to such collaboration is how to create an environment that invites people to work together without a centralised control and command structure. And, at some point, you still need to have some kind of authority and consensus to avoid chaos – so called ground-up principles, that can be very basic, but people are willing to follow them voluntarily, not feeling they are imposed by others… There are lots of recipes for good and decent community work but the ingredients must always include kindness, vision, having the big picture, empathy and care, risk taking, hard work and definitely fun and food! Accepting that we are all different at the same time as focusing on our common interests is a good start….This is especially important to organisations like us; within our own organisation, we need to work with so many volunteers and we also have to work with other organisations and communities… nobody asks you to do that; you do that because you need it or you believe that it is right…to get real change it has to come from within. There is no exception to collaboration.*

While we cannot force collaboration, three distinctive attributes critical to any collaborative projects can be identified among the community food initiatives involved in my research. First, having shared motivations (purposes), goals and values is a must for collaboration, as it provides a unifying effect to the direction and commitment of participating members, whether individuals or organisations. Members need to collectively identify activities that cannot be done better alone. While the motivation (purpose) addresses "why we are here to work together", the goals are the milestones in pursuit of the purpose. Values have normative elements which outline how the members are expected to behave in different situations, depending on institutional arrangements, from a day-to-day operational basis (i.e. operational rules) to general policies and principles (i.e. collective action rules and constitutional rules).

Members in any collaboration want to see things accomplished. These collaboration efforts should lead to practical, tangible and intangible outcomes, and some informants asserted that 'quick wins' or 'picking lower hanging fruit' in the start-up stage may result in virtuous circles. Many study participants shared their experience that it is best to keep activities relatively small and simple at the beginning of the process. However, there was also a tension found between setting "unachievable goals" which could force people to fundamentally rethink their mental models for achieving objectives and 'pragmatic ones' which can be fulfilled more easily under the existing framework. However, shared purposes, goals and values did not mean full agreement and Sen's (1990) 'conflictual cooperation' was found quite valid in my empirical research. One volunteer at the The Big Lunch, Peckham, wisely said:

> *We don't have to agree with everything in order to work together though, even at times, working with our enemies is also crucial, a paradoxical kind of collaboration.*

The second attribute which helps to foster collaboration is building capacity and setting a priority for joint action. Many participants highlighted the importance of

available and tangible (material) support in developing different ways of thinking and learning skills. Within communities leaders must prioritize their efforts and place their resources in initiatives to encourage collaborative actions. One participant spoke of the importance of funding, support particularly given the current economic situation:

> *Everything has a cost. It is financial investment, emotional investment and physical investment. Money is not everything, but money does help. Volunteers also have to eat. Money can be used to continue up-keep, training, networking, and organising events…sometimes you can get things donated to you, but sometimes it's nice to buy better quality tools, good quality gloves, treats for the people, especially the youngsters working with us, maybe a cooked meal for them… It's nice to have some money that can be self-sustainable for a joint project. At the moment it is not easy, especially in this economic situation…Funding, however, sometimes you invest weeks for a funding application and at the end you get nothing… the other day, I met a Belgium officer who is interested in borrowing our model to have a go in Belgium…they want to apply for an EU grant. So guess what? They plan to work on the application at least for a year. What kind of institution can afford to hire a group of people just to write a funding application? (An officer at Capital Growth)*

Time is another crucial resource. If there is insufficient time for a particular activity, it is because other activities are perceived to need a higher priority. 'Finding enough time' is quoted frequently by initiatives studied as a key challenge, but some informants recognised that the 'challenge of time' can be seen in terms of organizational commitment and priorities. Furthermore, while it is true that collaboration can occur informally, many participants did highlight this as only the start of a process and more staff time will inevitably be needed if the effort is to become a sustained process. In addition, resources such as knowledge, skills, networks, recognition and reputation (branding), endorsement and power were all central elements for effective collaboration at different levels and scales. As one participant at Greenwich Cooperative Development Agency pointed out:

> *'Cooperative autonomy' maybe sounds strange when you first hear it but if you think about it carefully you will find it making good sense. You have to ensure you are independent and secure, a basic autonomy, then you are in a better position to talk about cooperation. In fact, from my observation, diversity is a kind of art of working independently together. Rochdale Principles and ICA [International Co-operative Alliance] particularly highlight we must build our own capacity then we can prioritise collaboration because then you can contribute more…It's not only a technical thing, but a cultural shift, for example, it requires different skills and mentality to work together for campaigning something than working together running a cooperative business.*

The third attribute contributing to collaboration is leadership and entrepreneurship. For many, as common sense indicates, the overwhelmingly predictor of success for any collaboration is the quality of leadership of the project and the talent and motivation of the participants carrying it out. Leaders are expected to make time to deal with the critical aspects of motivating team members, while developing a collaborative spirit and entrepreneurial energy. Some recommendations provided by participants in my study included: 1) a leader should occupy multiple roles ranging from facilitator, coach, mentor, sponsor and/or translator, among other qualities; 2) leaders and followers should be engaged in a dynamic relationship; 3) every member (staff, stakeholders,

volunteers, etc.) should be seen as a resource and leaders are those who care to cultivate new leaders; 4) engaging in positive, supportive dialogue and communication and open to receive input. Unlike some participants who emphasised the significance of material resources, others noted instead that non-monetary incentives sometimes were even more influential in community initiatives. Examples of non-financial incentives ranged from creativity, innovation, enjoyment, and even convenience in terms of processes and communication; all played an important role in encouraging wider participation and collaboration.

For still others (especially evident in those community enterprises, but also in other categories), developing collaborative projects required an entrepreneurial perspective (although a participant at Greenwich Cooperative Development Agency opposed the idea of being called entrepreneurs but favoured the term 'cooperator'). For these participants without waiting for conditions to be 'perfect' to start, they have decided to just go ahead and find their own paths. Since the collaborative process has been increasingly carried out in complex, multi-actor structures, understanding the characteristics of resources (recognition of resources available) were also considered important. It is interesting to note that while some leaders of these communities insisted that decisions should be made based on data and 'evidence' as opposed to hinging on anecdotal evidence or the opinion of the most senior person, others seemed to suggest recognising everyday wisdom accumulated through life-long experiences in the field.

Finally, as Jaroz (2000) notes in Washington, USA, women have taken up numerous leadership positions in many alternative food networks. A similar phenomenon was also found in London. In discussing the attributes of leadership with the same community leader whom I met at a Women's Environmental Network annual event, and presenting her evaluation on the voluntary spirit of collaboration at the beginning of this section, I have gained more insights into gendered food networks and collaboration both within and across those community food initiatives investigated.

> *With different hats on, a mother and a daughter, a feminist, an activist, a global citizen, I am particularly interested in the role of women in the current transitional time. Mothers are the first food producers through breastfeeding their children…about 60-70% of the food is produced by women in Africa, increasing numbers of women are in food activism and work on sustainability around the world…so many women, especially young women in London interested in food and many of them occupying leader positions…What does this all mean? I've been thinking now perhaps it is a good time to consider what differences gender can make in transforming our food systems. Food activism can learn a lot from the feminist movement in the past decades. For example, if feminism wants to claim gender equality, it must apply to both men and women, but in reality, unconsciously, we tend to have more sympathy for women. I'm not saying this is wrong, but we can do better than that…What I'm trying to contemplate is that if gender difference still holds true, what should woman leaders contribute to the process of change? Don't get me wrong thinking only women can do this, of course it is not true, in fact, we need both men and women working hand in hand and seeing all of us as one…One particular aspect came to my mind…I wonder if we can play a better role as mediator, integrator, synthesiser…a convergence of different ways of living and knowing…bringing all fragmented elements into one, people like to hear stories, but what kind of stories do we want to tell…for me, I see patterns of things in our movements…we are looking for ways to put things together and include ideas from all factions, old and new values, and hard science*

> *and spirituality… Where is new inspiration for the next generation of feminism to come from, if we still insist on the validity of such a term? (A member of Women's Environmental Network)*

Her observations provided support for the idea that gender has an important role to play in shaping the development of alternative food networks and sustainable practices, and, more broadly, in community development. This is all tied with the work of ecosocialist/ecofeminist research addressing gender and a gendered commoning (e.g. Mies and Bennholdt, 1995, 2001; Shiva, 2005, 2010; Brownhill et al., 2012) incorporated in the integrative framework.

Are we talking about the same thing?

Clear communication, both internally among team members and externally with other communities and a wider audience – the general public – is vital for a collaborative project. A lack of clarity with regard to communication can pose serious challenges. Issues such as relevance, terminologies and framing were revealed through interviews to have impacts on the likelihood and extent of collaboration among organisations and on attracting and retaining people's participation in their initiatives. Three terms, urban agriculture, food security and food sovereignty, were particularly confusing during my empirical investigation.

First, urban agriculture was a term widely used but poorly defined in the context of those community food initiatives visited and studied in London. Similar terms included 'urban food production', 'urban food growing', 'urban gardening', and 'growing food in the city', just to name a few. Some reported that urban agriculture is a misleading term; it tends to suggest production only and not focus on how production links with the rest of the urban system and is still being portrayed as a 'technical solution' while the values discussed and the conversations made seem to be missing (a member of SOAS Food Studies). It also tends to get conflated with notions of self-sufficiency or 'survival/crisis strategies' of urban food production which made many people dismissive of the idea that London could ever produce enough to feed itself and therefore avoid broader discussion and implications about urban agriculture. While acknowledging the significance of productivity, most participants put more emphasis on the social dimensions of food production and reflected on the meaning of urban agriculture in London, what the ultimate goal was and how to communicate the broader issues of urban agriculture. One participant talked about 'civic agriculture':

> *I've been thinking about this issue and I came across a term – civic agriculture – which seems to me makes more sense in addressing civic participation, rethinking the relationship between humanity and nature and food, and an embodied practice, realising our beliefs and values, etc…Having said that, I also think the argument that it is not enough to only address the social dimension of urban agriculture, the case of Will Allen being an example, that it can be both a productive local food system and also encompass other social, cultural and spiritual aspects. It's a communication challenge but much more than communication, it is a fundamental question about what London's position on food and agriculture is and how the current situation is being presented? Are we talking about the same thing when we talk about urban agriculture in London? I haven't heard any comprehensive analysis on that and in my view, we can't move far without an integrative thinking (A member of the Good Food Partnership).*

In addition, during my fieldwork, a number of participants raised the issue of why there is an obvious disconnection between old and new forms of urban agriculture, for example, between allotment movements and Transition Town Networks or the Capital Growth Campaign. Wiltshire and Geoghegan (2012) discuss what parts the diversity of approaches and participants with different motivations and associated 'rights' and the role that social organisation play in voluntary urban food production in Britain. Instead, by seeing these differences as a problem, they can represent a pathway to build capacity collectively among communities. However, in order to achieve such an overall aim, one participant wisely commented:

> *We need to make the new and the old find common ground in what they are doing, something relevant to both of them…When they are talking about urban agriculture, I don't think they are talking about the same thing (A member of SOAS Food Studies).*

Another confusing term was food security. While food security has been discussed intensively at a policy level in recent years (e.g. Defra, 2010), it was found that a number of interviewees had never heard of the term. Among those who did respond, different understandings of food security were discovered, including: (1) food availability and access which were addressed at a global, national, household and individual level; (2) food safety with concepts related to safety and quality of food, i.e. non-GM food, unpolluted/uncontaminated food, and fresh, healthy and organic food; and (3) a most unexpected opinion, indicating food security as related to vandalism.

The first time I heard the term 'food security' interpreted as food vandalism, I was not sure if I had made myself understood. However, I did not stop the participants from expressing themselves and telling their stories because I thought this was an interesting association and I intended to find out the logic behind and the implication of this 'misunderstanding'. This following quote highlights the importance of clarifying whether people were on the same page; nothing should be taken for granted. Nor can we ignore the relevance to participants of any potential collaboration. One urban farmer told me what a shame food security was such a problem. He said,

> *No matter how much time and effort you put into it, food security is always a problem! You know, our cabbage was stolen the other day (A plot holder at Spa Hill Allotment).*

Compared to the previous two terms which gained popularity for a while, food sovereignty has only become more familiar in the last few years. One participant I met at a SOAS weekly seminar shared her observations of the evolution of the term used in London:

> *Even two years ago I wouldn't use this term in public…but all of sudden I heard many people discuss it and even organise a network conference like this, and now we are thinking to bring this concept to the Parliament. It's amazing to see how this concept has developed so rapidly and why shouldn't it be the case?*

While the concept of food sovereignty was discussed by more people, one participant made a health warning that we should not ignore the essence of food security – predominantly the issue of food productivity. He commented:

> *I understand that, to many, food security has a bad connotation, tied up with big food corporations, biotechnology and neoliberal agenda…I agree that we should*

engage with the food sovereignty concept…but I am also worried that the genuine understanding of food security might be side-tracked…In London, isn't it a pressing issue, I mean the lack of local resilience in terms of self-sufficiency of food? We still rely on imported food…We can see all kinds of initiatives for urban food growing, Capital Growth, Transition Town Movement…But we can't see any sign of addressing the urban food security issue, most people still think London is very secure with our food but is it really the case? For me, food security and food sovereignty emphasise different things; they can be complementary to each other, rather than pointing a finger at each other (A volunteer at Growing Communities).

However, from my investigation, food sovereignty was still a term unfamiliar to most people and only a small group of researchers and international campaigning groups genuinely discussed this concept. Moreover, even among those who were familiar with the term, there were a number of unresolved issues. One participant shared his opinion with me at length:

Food sovereignty…the word 'sovereignty' in Spanish means 'power for the people': people can have democratic control over the food system; it was a well-articulated word and has its historical roots and political context, post-colony in Latin America, so to speak. But what does it mean to people in the UK? What does it mean globally? I don't want to deny the fact that I find this term rather uncomfortable, even though I agree with its arguments…We have a Queen here, that sovereignty is a confusing word for most people, I think…I don't want to criticise a term originated from the South and on the contrary we should respect it. But with the same logic, advocates for food sovereignty also have to consider local contexts when they want to make the message understood and accepted. Most groups campaigning for food sovereignty challenge international policies and supporting small farmers, pastoralists and fishing folk in the South. I see myself as an active member in global food movements. I've been to many countries in Africa, Latin America, India, China, etc. I know what we talked about here is very true and the situation is really urgent, but I also see limitations in the current strategy. What's the relevance of a food sovereignty movement in Brazil, Mexico, Sri Lanka and Kenya to those food movements in the UK, or more specifically in London? In fact, the term itself is not static and the definition changes if we, say, compare how people use it in different continents. Even in Kenya and Mozambique, food sovereignty means different things, so it does in Brazil and Mexico. It might sound like common sense, but it is not uncommon that people fall into the trap of focusing on names and forgetting the essence of their claims and how to bring people to their side…One good thing about the UK Food Sovereignty Movement – is that some advocates start to do more outreach work, and working along with more local groups, not to ignore the credits from these local groups, but kind of providing some kind of legitimacy connecting the local struggles to the global context (A participant at UK Food Sovereignty Movement Symposium).

This long quote illustrates clearly the unresolved issues inherent in the 'frames' used in social movements. Some of these issues refer specifically to the UK context (e.g. in a country under a Queen) and others to more general challenges (e.g. varied local interpretations within an umbrella frame; connecting global and local struggles). This is one example where we need to have a common language if we hope more people are willing to collaborate with each other. This also shows why critical reflections on these issues become essential, which is particularly pertinent if we ultimately aim to

work together to 'construct our own alternative economies, processes, cultures, and environment' as mentioned in the quotation at the beginning of this section.

God/devil is in the details

Interestingly the idiom "God/devil is in the details" was spoken on a number of occasions by those who took part in my work, to express the idea that details were important and therefore we should be attentive and careful in examining the processes of any collaborative project, regardless of a complicated system involving multiple organisations or a relatively small-scale initiative with fewer numbers of people involved at first. While this expression did mean 'get all the ground-level details right, and the big picture will fall into place', what was more intriguing to me was an elaborated interpretation embedded in this sentence. Three unique dimensions are discussed as follows.

First, God/devil is in the detail refers to a right balance between design and planning and emergence, i.e. providing an infrastructure but at the same time one flexible enough to allow for future adaptation and changes. Rather than conducting a symphony where all musicians and audience know exactly in advance what they will be performing and what they will be listening to, it is more like improvising in a jazz performance. A Nigerian participant vividly introduced me to two African proverbs with his whole body moving, "When the music changes, so does the dance" and "A master drummer must have seven eyes". One important point was made, that unlike natural systems, this planning and emergence in human society needs designed structure with rules and norms that provide continuity and stability, and offer a shared context of meaning and a shared sense of purpose and value. A right balance between the creativity of emergence and the stability of design was always a big challenge in practice. For some participants, one of the factors which made The Big Lunch so widespread around the country was its clear and simple DIY guidance. This guidance served to lower barriers to duplication and organisation, which in turn motivated more neighbourhoods to experiment on their own.

Although no one talked about Latour's actant network theory, I found some participants highlighting the role of non-human actors, especially spaces and place, played in fostering and enhancing collaboration. For example, one member of Transition Town Brixton shared her thoughts of the recent development of Brixton Market, and how to make a place more welcoming, creating a right environment to stimulate collaborative spirit. Marketing people knew only too well how to make things work, including a combination of formal and informal use of public space, the colours of zoning, the furniture they chose, and the collage-like mixture of small boutiques, cafés, restaurants and fresh food market stalls. She said, "We should learn from mainstream business to make our alternative food practices more attractive". In Bennet's words, it is "that which has efficacy, can do things, has sufficient coherence to make a difference, produce effects, alter the course of events. It is any entity that modifies another entity in a trial, whose competence is deduced from its performance rather than posited in advance of the action" (Bennet, 2010:3). She insisted that observing details in people's everyday use of space and incorporating those elements could improve collaborative spirit in a community:

> *By looking at how people are using public spaces and finding out what they like and don't like about them, it is possible to assess what makes them work or not work.*

Through these observations, it will be clearer what kinds of activities are missing and what might be incorporated. All these arrangements were the result of interplay between planning and emergence, a kind of evolving and accommodating process. Like many public artworks we can see in many places are stimulating and invite active dialogue rather than just passive observation…they help create social interactions…some planners, artists, and architects refuse to see themselves as experts but more like facilitators and collaborators (A member at Transition Town Brixton).

However, another participant – a volunteer at Growing Communities and a software developer by profession – pointed out one important element that was missing in most of the community food initiatives. In the world of information systems, speed is a key factor with regard to a company's innovation. 'Risk taking' is endorsed as a desired behaviour. A quick, hypothesis-driven decision-making process and 'fast experimentation' and 'fast failure' are considered positive investments as they eliminate possible solutions from contention. More importantly, he said, "to extend the definition of God/devil is in the details' you need both mobility and stability". He then provided me with an analogy of athletes to highlight the dynamic collaboration between planning and emergence in community food initiatives:

If you look at those athletes, they are all expressing stability in a dynamic and mobile position. That means they move into a mobile position and then express stability to drive force through it while other joints are moving. This means that one joint is becoming stiff while another becomes mobile and then becomes stiff while another becomes mobile, etc. With this kind of rotation and movement, we can have more dynamic 'collaboration' between planning and emergence (A volunteer at Growing Communities).

Second, 'God/devil is in the details' relates to micro-politics and emotions which were both quite common within those initiatives investigated. These politics and emotions can sometimes be difficult to communicate, which can result in an inherent uncertainty surrounding some of the collaborative projects. Special attention to these kinds of details and subtleties (unspoken words and gestures, a smile or a hug) are important if a collaborative project is to build trust and endure. For example, for some, there was cultural bias to collaborative behaviour thinking "If you are so keen on getting up and doing something about it too much, people think you are showing off or there must be some hidden benefit" (An organiser of The Big Lunch at Peckham). Another example: communities who worked on similar areas quite often faced severe competition for limited funding. For example, one interviewee commented:

That was our idea initially…they proposed we could work out a joint proposal for a better chance to win…but they took up our idea without including us in the end…what can you say? They are a bigger organisation; they've got the funding to implement the idea. We are happy that our idea got a lot of attention; people like it very much…but shall we tell everyone that it was our idea?…this event made us feel reluctant to work with them any more...They don't even say a word about it; as if nothing had happened at all! (A worker at the Calthorpe Project).

In addition, while volunteers were perceived as an important resource in many community initiatives, it was evident that there was a need to improve volunteer management, especially the 'people management' issues in some sites, to ensure that every volunteer felt they were part of an organisation or initiative and could develop

their full talent and potential. The following small episode might sound trivial but in fact, it was not so uncommon, based on my experience on the ground and calls for further sophisticated handling.

> *I was honest in telling the leader of the volunteers that I had a bus pass through which I can get some discount. But I still have to pay my train ticket…Sometimes if I miss one bus I have to wait another 30 minutes so I would go to the station to take the train to save some time. When I asked her [the volunteer leader] if I could claim my transportation fee, you know what she said…she looked at me with two big eyes open widely, 'if you have a weekly bus pass then you are not incurring extra expense to come', then I told her sometimes to save time and I use the train…she told me very seriously in front of many other volunteers that 'you have to do 3 good hours of work' I felt I was begging her, I really hate that…I told her quietly when no one was around, but she made a fuss to bring the issue to the public…She really didn't have to do so… if she explained to me that they are tight with their budget, I could understand that, but she made me feel so embarrassed in front of others…I said to myself I will vote with my feet…forget it I can go elsewhere to find interesting work to do…she is not removing my obstacles but adding more on my plate (An ex-volunteer at Organiclea).*

Third, the expression 'God/devil is in the details' also referred to a quality of persistence and consistency in the efforts among those community food initiatives I investigated to work together with others across sectors and boundaries to achieve something that could not have been done by any single organisation on its own. However, rather than only having an 'instrumental' motivation, I also noticed something deeper. You can have meaningful cooperation, one Brazilian woman in her sixties told me, but you have to work on it with persistence and consistence:

> *It's a lifetime task to learn how to work and live with others…cooperation is not always a natural born attribute, in fact, most likely not so…persistent and consistent, yes I believe these two attributes are important in our understandings and skills in cooperation. People have to stay connected to one another. It's a kind of consciousness and commitment, a way of life…to the way we look at every detail we engage with (A member at Women's Environmental Network).*

In a similar vein, I was impressed by Hare Krishna's presence from Monday to Friday in front of SOAS (university), where they regularly serve a vegetarian meal. Waiting for food in the long queue one day, I had a conversation a member of SOAS Food Studies. He made an interesting comment on the existence of Hare Krishna, where a new kind of 'community' worked together for a worldview, linking the visible and invisible, a force of union for the sake of the earth. When I asked him about the logic behind his thinking, he gave me a direct and indirect answer. The direct answer was that Hare Krishna people were present there all the time, persistently and consistently, doing one simple but important thing: serving a meal to people. This routine practice had become part of the iconic landscape and 'a living performance' on the university campus. For the indirect answer, he recited an old English poem to me, called *The Lesson of the Water-Mill*. The main scene in the poem is about grinding the corn with the power from the water mill, which depends on water constantly coming in, as with the supply of corn, the intricate relationship or 'co-existence' between the corn and water. Every detail must collaborate with each other properly in order to generate energy. Since corn will not refresh itself, and the water, 'although' looking the same is never the same, you need a constant source of power, in other words, 'keep going with it'. According to this person, the profundity

of a water-mill lies precisely in its 'constantly changing water' in the most routine and mundane everyday practice. In a way it is about seizing the moment. However, the moment is always about a relationship, existing through a constant supply of fresh new input, resource and energy. In turn, it represents a dynamic and regenerative system with its persistence and consistency in movement. Whether you agree with this interpretation, it is worth reading the first two stanzas of the poem with a fresher pair of eyes:

Listen to the water-mill
Through the live long day,
How the clicking of its wheel
Wears the hours away!
Languidly the autumn wind,
stirs the forest leaves,
From the field the reapers sing,
Binding up their sheaves;
And the proverb haunts my mind
As a spell is cast –
"The mill cannot grind
With the water that has past."

Autumn winds revive no more
Leaves that once are shed,
And the sickle cannot reap
Corn once gathered;
Flows the ruffled streamlet on,
Tranquil, deep, and still;
Never gliding back again
To the water-mill
Truly speaks the proverb old
With meaning vast –
"The mill cannot grind
With the water that has past."

Transforming challenges into opportunities

Although only one participant at Friends of Queen's Market explicitly used the Chinese word for 'crisis' (made up of two characters in Chinese (危機) – 'danger' and 'opportunity'), there was a recurring rhetorical language that communicated a more 'positive' and 'active' attitude towards change by saying how challenges can transform into opportunities. As one participant told me, 'challenges and opportunities are two sides of the same coin" (a member at Good Food Partnership). Based on my empirical work, three distinctive aspects of 'transforming challenges into opportunities' can be identified: first, advantages of marginality; second, preventing conflict through cooperation; and third, redefining focus, scope and processes.

First, there was a broad consensus that community initiatives, although gaining more attention and recognition, were all still in the minority in terms of quantity. As one participant estimated: "at most we account for 1 or 2 per cent of the whole population in London" (a member at Slow Food London). To some extent, my research echoed what Hall (2007:460) calls the 'unsilent minority': those natural born political leaders who are committed to resolving an evident problem. This 'unsilent minority', according

to Hall, is quite different from the majority of their fellow citizens who grumble about things getting worse but have no faith that things can be changed (typical Londoners' cynicism), and thus rarely take action to do so (very often due to their rather 'perfunctory apologies' of a lack of time). While these Londoners' characteristics were undoubtedly seen in a few places I visited, I also observed the almost 'strategic' and 'privileged' position of many informants' acting as a minority or more precisely a 'marginality' – 'advantages of marginality' (citing one participant at Bonnington Café). Here, there was a small difference between minority and marginality; whereas the former is a quantitative concept in number, the latter refers to issues of power and control which are value based and most likely a rhetorical construction. hooks (1990) once explained: "I make a definitive distinction between that marginality, which is imposed by oppressive structures and that marginality one chooses as a site of resistance – as locations of radical openness and possibilities" (p.153). Similarly, in London during my fieldwork, this kind of 'rhetorical marginality' or 'marginality by choice' was distinctive to that of structural marginality which is imposed by oppressive systems such as class, racism, sexism and socio-economic inequalities.

The advantages of marginality could be illustrated in at least two realms. First, marginality offered a chance to 'reframe' the dominant narratives. Examples can be found in those more 'oppositional' kinds of collective action such as 'reclaiming public urban spaces' in the Spa Hill Allotment, the earlier history of the Calthorpe Project, and the Queen's Market as well as some of the guerrilla gardeners who stand up to oppose the Council's plan to replace their existence with new urban development. In so doing, it was a way that exposed the fundamental 'wrong' of the Council. One informant even thought that a popular approach to campaign for urban agriculture like 'Capital Growth' was a sign of co-optation from the mainstream:

> *The line between the mainstream and the margins is not necessarily a clear one… Capital Growth apparently undermines the fundamental challenges by not demanding better and necessary conditions for making real progress for the development of urban agriculture in London... In some way it undermines those who are organizing to demand the necessary resources, funding, policy, knowledge and institutions, etc. by the state, civic society and even those big corporations (A plot holder at Spa Hill Allotment).*

In other words, for some, marginality was an essential component in developing healthy food systems and, more broadly, human society.

> *Some might think it [food sovereignty] is being marginalised in the sense that in the Global North not many people talk about this concept, only a small group of researchers, activists or NGOs. Unlike those marginalised peasants in the developing world who are fighting for their livelihood, the UK Food Sovereignty Movement exists to serve a coordination and communication role, to spread out the words, to offer a critique of the current neoliberal food systems…at this moment, we should keep a good distance…keep this marginalised position. It's more effective if we know well their [mainstream] logic and ways of doing things but you are not part of it…you can develop a unique perspective, a critical attitude and a good collection of knowledge and experience with the two worlds… We think it's better to keep the tension between the margin and the centre and the key is to have new inputs from below to keep the movements running and refreshing (A member of UK Food Sovereignty Movement).*

Second, it provided an important impetus for innovative collaboration, for example, the timing or pressure for solutions was ripe, and their interdependence was present in that no individuals and organisations were able to achieve something on their own. Moreover, for some, being at the margins meant to be in a 'niche' or 'protective' spaces where innovations and experiments might be more acceptable. As one participant commented:

> *Since we are not in the mainstream, we are constantly aware of our limited capacity… this is helpful in seeking new opportunities for collaboration, or thinking out of the box…some kind of threats and constraints are not necessarily a bad thing…constraints can be a kind of freedom…we are encouraged to break rules…It pushes you to come up with creative and innovative ideas as well…Sainsbury's is happy to give us its foodstuffs and the local council is also happy to help us find idle kitchens for us to serve people in need…it's about how you find your usp [unique selling point] (A community leader at FoodCycle).*

The second aspect of 'transforming challenges into opportunity' was found in the efforts of some participants trying to prevent 'conflicts' through 'collaboration'. In many instances, certain participants talked about their main goal being to find ways to improve conflict prevention rather than conflict resolution. They highlighted the importance of the fact that collaboration should start long before serious conflicts have become obvious, even though they also admitted that unfortunately this proactive problem solving was very unlikely to happen in their daily operation. Nevertheless, participants discussed how the potential for collaboration could be approached from both the positive and the negative side. While the former lay in the potential benefits it brings, such as a better quality of networking and information sharing, less duplication and empowerment, the negative side was the cost of conflict and the suffering that uncertainty brings to those involved. It was well understood that the development of collaboration was a slow and often incremental process, demanding from all concerned an optimistic attitude and never giving up. How to decide an appropriate scope for preventing conflicts through collaboration was very challenging. While a broad scope can make the negotiation very complex, and more difficult to reach agreement, it is also important that sometimes we incorporate indirect stakeholders, if we are genuinely considering bridging organisations, overcoming win-lose struggles and multiplying win-win solutions, that is, 'win-win-win-win' situations in Wood's (2007) work. A number of community leaders emphasised the importance of 'emotions' and the 'spiritual dimension' rather than 'reasoning' in the process of reducing conflict and enhancing the potential of collaboration. As one stated:

> *You have to put yourself in other people's shoes. Try to think from their perspective first. Try to focus on the underlying interest rather than how conflicting matters might reduce the chance of terrible confrontations. Everyone likes to think he is in the right… For example, when we encourage people to change their diet to become vegetarian, reducing their meat consumption, for the sake of their health and the environment, we also have to consider those who are working in livestock business for a living. Of course there would be conflict and tension…It's their livelihood…and if we ignore these conflicts and other people's concerns and anxieties, we can't move very far…Having said that, we are human beings and if we keep a caring mind and a wish to maintain good relations…and we are willing to listen to their concerns…most people can feel it and appreciate your being kind to them…It's a collaborative spirit that touches people's hearts deeply…If relations are good, even though we are not able to solve all*

the problems, we are able to come together to work out a mutual plan, and prevent many conflicts in advance (A chef at Bonnington Café).

Finally, for some participants, transforming challenges into opportunities also suggested a time to reflect on their work more thoroughly and to consider redefining the focus, extent and process of the projects or activities they were involved in. Most of the study participants expressed the view that although there was usually a monitoring mechanism, if things went well, they did not usually feel a need to change anything and tended to take their normal operation for granted. However, they all understood we are living through challenging times and these 'unexpected' challenges (e.g. funding cuts, changes in project personnel) represented some kind of opportunity for renewal and transformation and offered the chance to re-evaluate how they worked and to be more mindful and strategic about how they managed their finances and the need to take stock of their values and priorities. "Sometimes you need a crisis to shake you and wake you up from peaceful time" (A worker at the Calthope Project). In short, what I found across a range of initiatives was a mentality of fixing the problem rather than spending energy worrying and complaining about those challenges they encountered.

Creating virtuous circles

To conclude, I highlight three dimensions associated with collaboration, particularly in terms of how to create virtuous circles to generate greater synergies that emerged from the empirical study. First, it is important to have a higher perceived legitimacy within and outside the collaboration. Many participants discussed the gradual effects in any kind of collaborative projects. They suggested the need to start with a small pilot project, something simpler, lighter, quicker and cheaper as the complexity of collaboration is such that you cannot expect to do everything initially. The most successful collaboration, according to these participants, took place with short term improvement and incremental changes that can be adjusted, learned and refined over time for years. There was an implicit assumption that great things are done by a series of small things brought together. People preferred to see something achieved, if only a very modest result, which can enhance participants' confidence and building mutual trust and respect. It is also very significant that the result was not only known within the direct participants in collaboration but also in a wider audience. As one participant said at a guerrilla gardening event, "to provoke, to inspire, to call for collective action, you need to show people something is possible and easy to follow".

Secondly, we have to deal with change and uncertainty in our concerns with collaboration in a complex world. Usually there is a spiral and non-linear development, for example, at times three steps forward and two steps backwards. It is suggested by the community food initiatives in this research, that there is no final step in their working process, as this kind of practice is an ongoing process which requires continuous reflective and critical monitoring, evaluation and collective learning at different levels, and finding ways to improve. The important message here is that each member of the collaboration should make a concerted effort to understand others people's 'ways of working'. This can, in itself, build relationship and strengthen collaboration. Although acknowledging the many challenges in effective evaluation, there is a need to measure what is important (decided by the team collectively), rather than making things that are easy to measure sound important. In addition, capturing and sharing learning can be a key strategy of collaborative development: as is agreeing upon the aim of learning and how to communicate and disseminate this learning within and outside collaboration.

Finally, since we cannot force collaboration, apart from providing sufficient resources and giving higher priorities to support collaborative actions/projects, for many participants I talked to, nurturing a collaborative 'spirit' seemed to be more fundamental. For them, any long-lasting change must originally come from within, rather than being imposed, and to have this understanding and willingness to collaborate voluntarily and wholeheartedly goes much beyond an instrumental process. At the same party – The Big Lunch at Peckham – I had a conversation with a Nigerian immigrant who was also heavily involved with growing food in the city. I remember clearly what he told me with a kind of ancient wisdom:

> *We are living in a symbiotic world and if we start to look for examples, symbiosis is everywhere…Back in my hometown, Nigeria, we work together on the farm and we celebrate it together at harvest…You are not only working with people but also with plants, insects, birds, and all kinds of things…If people know that, they probably will love each other and their community more…The cycle has a spirit in it…Humble, we all have to be humble and love people…and understand we are part of nature...We all share something in common, if we dig the land very deep, we may find out we all come from the same origin…We must connect ourselves to something far beyond us…I like ancient myths, they tell us we are not alone and we need one another.*

This ancient wisdom of creating virtuous circles through nurturing a collaborative spirit seems to indicate a new vision of transformation. In the context of global food movements, Nicholas (2011) calls for a bigger scope of collaboration and alliances. He urges:

> *We are moving forward and opening many common spaces and alliances that did not exist ten years ago. But we are still very divided, each of us in our own niche…We have to go construct our own realities now. We cannot wait for them to arrive from above. Transformation comes from the power of a process from below…now, we are struggling to construct our own alternative economies, processes, cultures, and environment (Nicholson, 2011:12-19).*

Through collaboration we endeavour to foster a specific vision in order to construct our own new realities by working together between our organisations and alliances. On this note, I would like to move onto the final emergent category from my investigation, 'Growing a new piece of the city', and discuss the visions and narratives of London that our community food initiatives and my study participants shared with me. I will also explore the relationships between the commons narrative and the visions of growing a new piece of the city in the final section.

3.3.4 Growing a new piece of the city

At the time of my investigation, London was in the process of preparing, for the third time, the hosting of the Olympics Games, and the capital was full of statements such as 'Creating sustainable legacy'; 'sustainable urbanism'; 'urban renaissance'; and 'inspiring a generation'. One evening, I was sitting in a public debate at UCL, entitled 'growing a new piece of the city'[1], which focused on how London 2012 Olympics would impact on altering the landscape of East London and on the important issues of place, memory and public culture arising from the transformation of post-industrial spaces in London. For example, while it was seen as an inspirational equivalent to compare London's

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(1) See http://www.ucl.ac.uk/urbanlab-archive/en2/index.php?page=3.2.4

Olympic Park with New York's Central Park, we were also reminded that Central Park was initially an elitist idea, even though it turned out to have a popular appeal. The dominant discourse and the explicit articulation of regeneration of westlands in East London might be problematic. These spaces were not empty but full of rich history and cultural uses by ordinary residents. In addition, other concerns included the integration of biodiversity and the Olympic Park, as well as the integration of remaining industrial infrastructures and new developments, while keeping spaces for artists' imagination and elaboration.

While I found both supporters and opponents of the London Olympics among the community food initiatives that I studied, nevertheless many participants expressed a view that this was a good time to reflect on the future of London in general and the future of food in London more specifically. As Pearson (2007) states, 'the city as an ever-changing being' is 'a living entity', and we need approaches that reflect an understanding of the city as a constantly changing whole that is capable of learning and becoming. The notion of 'growing a new piece of the city' seemed to me one of the most poetic ways of imagining and envisaging the city, with the very word 'growing' having an intricate relationship to food and agriculture, and showing the natural cycles of a living entity and all its associated attributes.

Therefore, the fourth and the final emergent category is about 'growing a new piece of the city' through the lens of food and agriculture. I start by presenting one vision from the Mayor of London and a further four unique visions from ordinary people, showing how participants in my study were 're-imagining the city'. In section two I will discuss whether the often-cited notion that 'Food brings people together' can be helpful to foster some kind of collective narratives and common goals. In the final section I will discuss the level of awareness of the commons among those community food initiatives I investigated. To conclude, I will reflect on the relationships between community food initiatives, growing a commons food regime and growing a new piece of the city and ways forward to that goal.

Re-imagining the city

Much has been said and written about the Capital Growth Campaign, to the extent that it became a byword for local growing in London. The campaign was originally inspired by Vancouver's 2010 by 2010 campaign and the *Feeding the Olympics* report, and aims to create 2012 growing spaces by 2012. By provided funding, education and support Capital Growth has facilitated numerous local growing projects. In particular, they have focused on socially and economically disadvantaged communities. Capital Growth was made possible predominately by external factors, including incorporation in London's Food Strategy, strong partnerships, the Vancouver precedent, and connection to the Olympics. However, Morgan and Sonnino (2010) highlight many unresolved issues such as instability and sustainability of land security, a lack of resources (e.g. funding) and governance issues which may have inhibited outcomes.

Apart from Capital Growth's mega-campaign which represented a partnership of civic society and government, there were many inspiring visions and images, some of them implemented and others not. I observed a variety of envisioning methodologies to consider whole system change, and devised means to enable people to shape the future of communities. These methodologies, including backcasting, permaculture principles, Open Space, Future Search, participatory green mapping, and The World Café, were

used at some of the community food initiatives I visited. While, for some participants, attending these activities was more like a social networking event, which may have had nothing to do with creating future scenarios, through intensive investigation, I did collect a number of inspirational scenarios from ordinary people that I considered worth sharing. Here are four of those inspiring visions.

The first vision is of how an ordinary person can have an extraordinary dream through their living everyday practices. A dream that the person hoped would be made and seen around every corner of the city. One study participant who was a local resident around the Bonnington Café told me of his 'love affair' with this café in his own neighbourhood:

> *My love affair with Bonnington Café is a simple one…the area outside, the way residents have planted up so much and it looks different as soon as you are in the area…it's quite an attractive area anyway and an unexpected oasis…also, it's doing something different, allowing anyone to cook there…It gives anyone who is thinking of starting their own business a chance to try it out for real, anyone who just likes the idea of cooking for other people and neighbours can do it…it breaks down barriers among different groups of people…People are inspired and empowered through the tangible benefits…it brightens things up and offers us an alternative view and a concrete example…they are not only dreaming but actually cultivating their ideas... You know, it started as a squat and has become established; so its radical history is also very interesting…They've got themselves organised, making their own rules…the momentous decisions in the sharing of tasks and in the creation of desire are all made here in the kitchen and in the garden…you talked about 'growing a new piece of the city' and I think this is a very good example of it, a people's testimonial to the power of sustainable communities…I know it sounds like jargon, sustainable communities, in policy language, which is not particularly helpful…but what I want to do is to describe Bonnington Café, I mean, sustainable communities in a more fluid sense, to describe a group of people, who are organised to share and make a place together…people co-existing which would shape their own and others' identities…Well, personally, living in London all my life…I want to see this kind of place a lot more.*

The second vision, shared by a member of Greenwich Cooperative Development Agency, related to a DIY-style food cooperative model, where people help one another showing mutual respect and mutual trust and care, and a strong sense of ownership and community.

> *I'm so impressed by the Fareshares cooperative model where you don't feel you are entering a shop but a friend's home…It's open to anyone in the neighbourhood and community. Everything is on a DIY-basis, you bring your own bags, weigh your own stuff you want to buy, and calculate the total cost…people trust you and you feel it's your shop, it's run by volunteers, and people who used it have a sense of ownership and a strong sense of belonging…it stimulates people's good qualities and encourages you to appreciate things there and try your best to maintain its standard…It's particularly good for children, allowing them a positive environment to develop an attitude, for example, you bring your own bottle to refill oil or jams…it's an everyday practice that requires a deep understanding of what a good and meaningful life can be and should be…I know it would be literally unrealistic to see one day every shop become a food co-op like that, but I do hope we can have many more shops like that across London. As they say, it's nobody's business but also everybody's business and it*

relies on our active involvement to keep it running over all these years and many years to come.

The third one speaks volumes about an alternative vision for 'feeding the Olympics' by requesting enough funding to fundamentally develop a regenerative urban ecosystem as well as people's capacity to transform our food economy. It also takes advantage of London 2012 to showcase its inclusiveness and diversity, a true sustainable Olympic Games as planned.

> *At the moment of the announcement of London's winning the hosting of the 2012 London Olympic Games, I dreamed of joining hundreds of thousands of Londoners who are interested in local and community food, who would receive £1billion fund, a very small percentage of the entire budget for the Games, but big enough to generate at least hundreds of thousands of small and medium family farms in and around London, from the inner city extending to peri-urban green belt, and to the regional idle agricultural land, to make it possible genuinely to build capacity to revitalise our food economy. A regenerative urban ecosystem and urban metabolism to make London greener and less wasteful, and to conserve urban wildlife and biodiversity…The government, NOGs, and academia haven't really seriously considered the level of soil depletion and pollution regionally and nationally…what kind of production systems should we develop? What's our framework for sustainable agriculture at large? We are not doing something cosmetic…we should have a kind of coherent plan but still keep it spontaneous, adapting to our surroundings…That will inspire a young generation to come back to the farm, to celebrate food culture, even though British food isn't the most exciting one, but you know what I mean…Food is about pride and pleasure… and having a sense of experiment and adventure necessary to produce and eat healthy, clean and unpolluted food, which is also good for our environment as well as social relations…This will also create new jobs, I would assume, reduce much of the pressing unemployment problem, especially for those immigrants, women and men, some of them already in catering work but with very bad working conditions…Moreover, instead of having big corporations to provide catering services at the Games, with four years training and knowledge and reskilling, we can source fresh produce and have a wide variety of cosmopolitan cuisines to demonstrate London's position, diversity, inclusiveness and vibrancy and a real sustainable Olympic…just imagine you can have Kosher falafel, Mexican dumplings, Chinese naah bread, and of course locally grown apples and pears in London orchards…everyday has different menus, all provided by ordinary people and local cafés and catering, and not provided by McDonald's or Starbucks (A member at Organiclea).*

In the final vision, the relevance of food sovereignty and a global city like London is discussed and raises more radical and fundamental issues such as democracy, justice, and a broader conception of citizenship. It emphasises the importance of active engagement with politics and care for those marginalised populations.

> *Most people would think food sovereignty is not relevant to the urban context, and think it talks about the global food systems…whereas this concept originally comes from the rural environment, from small peasants in the developing countries…we should not underestimate its relationship to the city, we now know that more than half of the people in the world are living in cities where urban food security is increasingly challenging… There is a whole spectrum that is relevant, I think. In essence, it is a concept of democracy and justice, something similar to the saying that it's food of the*

people, by the people and for the people… Some people might think we don't have to engage with politics, or even are disinterested in power...but as long as there is a group of people, there is politics…it's not so much about power itself being a bad thing but how you use it and who has it…what I like about the Occupy London movement is that they emphasise that we, precisely you and me, and many others, are 99% of the majority and we have the right to decide what kind of life and city we want to live in…food sovereignty is about communities being empowered to take control in defining their own food system…through democratic processes…we need to reconsider the power structures such as national subsidies for unsustainable farming systems… is it fair to give grants to those large farms with practices of pesticide and all kinds of chemicals? What kind of land reform do we need? What kind of tariff structures… and we must have a broader understanding of the idea of citizenship…Challenging a food system is also challenging broader issues such as investment in education, redistribution of wealth and equality policy, basically to have equal opportunity and ability to participate in our everyday life where any decision might shape our way of living…Cities make these issues more visible and the small and local scale is important, because it is accessible to everybody. Ralph McTell's popular song 'Street of London'[(2)] just comes to my mind.…shall we not to consider those marginalised people, the homeless, those forgotten people, and many underground inhabitants in London? (A member of UK Food Sovereignty Movement)

These four vivid and imaginative visions were only small samples, but hopefully, enough to illustrate a myriad of multi-faceted dimensions of the future of food and agriculture as envisaged by ordinary people. So, what can these different visions presented here tell us? In evaluating their significance, two distinctive aspects can be further identified that would help us to capture how those participants were re-imagining the city of London. The first is a complex reconfiguration and a spectrum of speed, scope and scale of change: for example, the interplay between top-down and bottom-up as well as the combinations of piecemeal reforms and radical revolutions in transforming London food systems and associated issues. The second is the notion of 'aesthetics of bricolage'. 'Aesthetics' refers to a 'politics' of 'aesthetics' defined by Rancière (2006), a new way to create new communities and a mode of articulation between ways of making, showing and thinking their relationship through different kinds of bricolage. Bricolage is a word that carries the connotation of tinkering and doing odd jobs and the creation of something useful by using the resources at hand.

More than two thirds of the community food initiatives I investigated repeatedly mentioned the pressing issues of compound crises of climate collapse, resource depletion, and above all inequality in terms of power distribution, wealth, health/nutrition, education. Among them, many showed a slightly sceptical view of the top-down approach to urban development but at the same time also recognised the importance of coordinated effort, especially support from the government. With regard to the speed, scope and scale of change, a more complex picture was revealed in that, between black

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(2) The lyrics of Street of London

*Have you seen the old man
In the closed-down market
Kicking up the paper,
with his worn out shoes?
In his eyes you see no pride
Hand held loosely at his side
Yesterday's paper telling yesterday's news*

*So how can you tell me you're lonely,
And say for you that the sun don't shine?
Let me take you by the hand and lead
you through the streets of London
I'll show you something to make you
change your mind*

*Have you seen the old girl
Who walks the streets of London
Dirt in her hair and her clothes in rags?
She's no time for talking,
She just keeps right on walking
Carrying her home in two carrier bags.*

*In the all night cafe
At a quarter past eleven,
Same old man is sitting there on his own
Looking at the world
Over the rim of his tea-cup,
Each tea last an hour
Then he wanders home alone*

*And have you seen the old man
Outside the seaman's mission
Memory fading with
The medal ribbons that he wears.
In our winter city,
The rain cries a little pity
For one more forgotten hero
And a world that doesn't care*

and white, there were many shades of grey. Some participants realised that there was no easy answer once we added the notion of equality and morality into the measurement. For many, the concepts of social transformation, reform, and revolution are hard to be categorised. For most of them, reform and revolution were thought of as a continuous sequence and what made more sense was predominantly based on pragmatism and there was no general answer to be given without a specific context and situation. And again, participants had very different interpretations of radical or reformist (e.g. some people thought Transition Town Networks was a radical environmental movement while others highlighted its inherent a-political approach). Similarly, Jamie Oliver's food revolution, for many, only considered a small aspect of food systems in crisis. Interestingly, some community initiatives such as guerrilla gardening and London Food Link addressed the subversive elements in the process of transformation, and implicitly expressed the view that history is made through chance and determination, and it was still too early to see what would be the long-term impacts that all these community initiatives would bring about. Reflecting on the complexity of the current global situation and the role of food and farming in this transitional period, one study participant reflected that:

> *The world economy has spun into chaos. Now we realize that here is no easy answer once we have added equality and morality into the measurement…However, it's important that we must remember not to oversimplify the world's complexity…the city is not be labelled with campaigning slogans…on every issue, choices we face won't be just between different political parties, I think, they represent for more or less a very similar vision, they still stick to growth economy, competition, GDP, or that kind of stuff…However, in food and farming, I see something very positive is happening, full of good news…less cynical about possible and positive change…Changes are happening simply because a lot of people have seen things must be done and thus are doing them. Something unique about food…I sometimes think if we awaken our tongue, we are awaking our mind…People are not only imagining the city, they are learning to live in the world in a better way already…reforms, transitions, evolution or revolution, you name it, or perhaps a bit more of everything? Our decade's patience and involvement may finally be paying off (A member of SOAS Food Studies).*

Another distinctive dimension associated with re-imagining the city is the notion of 'aesthetics of bricolage'. Drawn from Rancière's (2006) definition of 'aesthetics' where he believes that everyone is entitled to take part in the on-going creation of the community, on the basis that everyone is able to think and speak. He also asserts that possibilities of sharing equally the communal space among people cannot be based on order and hierarchy but on ever-changing combinations and assemblies which call for people's creativity, innovation and imagination.

Specifically speaking, during my fieldwork, I found Miele and Murdoch's (2002) work on 'practical aesthetics' and Saito's (2007) notion of 'everyday aesthetics' very convincing to help sketch out the unique aspect of what I term an 'aesthetics of bricolage'. While 'practical aesthetics' refers primarily to traditional cuisines in contemporary rural areas, the three distinctive attributes associated with practical aesthetics are still relevant to the community food initiatives I visited. These attributes included: the practical aesthetics of restaurant work, referring to the tacit knowledge of growing food in terroir (i.e. local climate and soil) and the craft skill involved in reproducing traditional cuisines; the aesthetical-ethics of typical products and regional cuisine, which is tied to the pleasure of food and the ethical values of the food in terroir and local ecosystem; and finally, the inter-linkages covering food culture, ecological

sustainability and the local economy across the gastronomic landscape. Not only were these attributes evident in communities such as Slow Food London where projects like 'The UK Ark of Taste' and 'Forgotten Foods' endeavour to spread awareness of unique and seasonal ingredients, celebrating traditional artisan food culture heritage and fostering community participation and finding ways to protect London's edible bio-diversity, but they also revealed other unexpected places and occasions, for example, a beautiful fruit carving performance at The Big Lunch, Peckham and a sophisticated three course meal made up of so-called 'wasted food' at the pop-up event of Dinner Exchange.

As for the notion of 'everyday aesthetics', though originally inspired by environmental aesthetics, which is usually limited to both natural and built environments, it broadens the scope of aesthetics by exploring the multi-sensory aspects of everyday practices, including, for example, swapping seeds, gardening, exchanging recipes, cooking and composting and overall experiences in the creation of communal places and spaces. In particular, more emphasis was placed on the importance of the action-oriented and moral aesthetic judgment in everyday life (e.g. if you find something 'ugly' or 'wasted', you are encouraged to stand up and do something about it). The evidences of everyday aesthetics could be found across many community food initiatives studied which addressed both the extraordinariness of the ordinary, the values of freshness tidiness, and neatness as well as madness and absurdity. For instance, I found, in some case studies presented, a whole variety of stakeholders, including community leaders, volunteers, local craftsmanship workers, consumers, local authorities, and social movements were functioning to a large extent according to a set of aesthetic criteria as a distinct way of creating communities. In particular, Slow Food London, Transition Town Brixton, Bonnington Café, The Big Lunch, Peckham, and Guerrilla Gardeners proved to have a high degree of aesthetic construction within and across their community development.

Interestingly, while De Certeau (1984) distinguishes two kinds of agency, namely, strategy and bricolage, with the former referring to long-term planning and manipulation of power relationships (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) and the latter a kind of tactical act, based on calculations determined by the absence of an all-encompassing solution, what I found was a more dynamic and nuanced use of these two agencies to navigate spaces for change among some of those community food initiatives and study participants. Three important aspects are identified from my investigation.

First, DIY or self-help tactics should not be regarded only as survival strategies but also as creative tools. As one participant of Guerrilla Gardening mentioned:

> *One of our key principles is using what already exist around us, and ideally free of change…it goes beyond saving money or survival strategy, it's a good way to invite people to think out of box, being creative…It's like accepting what others have to offer. Taking what's at hand and actually doing something with it is more important than having what you think you need…many successful innovations are not a breakthrough, but only a recombination of existing but so far disconnected components.*

Second, self-help does not mean that people do not need help, and should not be confused with being isolated from wider society and the rest of the world. The DIY approach cannot be de-politicised; instead, it is a starting point to make ourselves and communities more powerful through working together to build our capacity to obtain

whatever resources we need to achieve what we desire. As one volunteer at 'Feeding the 5000!' critically commented:

> *Being tactical, flexible and opportunistic has been our strategy…We find that it is very important to open up something that is easily understood as a local practice and could be learned and replicated on a larger scale, and in doing so, we can start to relate those projects and practices to other similar projects somewhere else… we call it from local to global, and we feel encouraged that we are doing something simultaneously with so many people and organisations and communities around the world.…then, people start to realise that they are part of the global movements and their participation does make a difference one way or another…We have to be strategic all the time, not only deciding our strategies in the beginning of our projects but all the way through the whole process…life is full of uncertainties, so we have to adapt to those uncertainties by changing our strategies…and we also start to realise that a common problem we all face is that no single one is without conflict and different needs and interests…Do it yourself is not to romanticise that communities have all substantial resources and support…it's a way of polling resources for a coordinated movement…you wouldn't expect those resources to arrive to your hands automatically, you need to search and fight.*

Finally, the aestheticisation of DIY processes can and should be part of strategies to address social change, and some considered this has a better chance to engage with those who are still on the same page as advocates and campaigners. This aesthetic element was thought particularly relevant to food activism. Food practices are performative and process-based, which can arguably bring people aesthetic experiences. In so doing, it might be able to challenge conventional perceptions and systems of knowledge in a more accessible way. Unsurprisingly, an officer at Slow Food London emphasised that the aesthetic aspect has been largely addressed by food celebrities and top gastronomes but what I call 'aesthetics of bricolage' was often neglected in contemporary food movements. She said:

> *Learning to nurture a plant or a garden yourself, learning to cook yourself and others a nice meal, learning to appreciate good food around us, is the soul of beauty in our normal life…when we are promoting an alternative…it's not enough to have strategies, but have to think and play those strategies beautifully…We are not only rational creatures, but emotional and sensuous animals, and with a lot of people, their behaviours are not influenced by ideologies and politics but because something is tasty, beautiful and pleasant…A simple example you can see is that most community activities cannot live without good food, for sure, people come to an event not always for a debate on the future of food and farming in London but secretly are attracted by meeting people and particularly good food…good food is not those expensive cuisines but food cooked with heart and caring…you can say it's a hook, but I would say it's a beautiful hook and a natural one as well…we have to effectively engage with people both materially and psychologically…when we share a meal together, at least we make a step forward to open up an opportunity to win their stomach and perhaps luckily also their mind and heart.*

On this note of sharing a meal together, I will move to the next section to discuss an often-mentioned phrase that 'food brings people together'.

Can food bring people together?

Over the course of my investigation, across the many community food initiatives I visited, I realised that the importance of food in people's lives, and concerns over quality, provenance, environmental impact and health, seemed to lead individuals and organisations to acquire more knowledge about, and control over, the food they eat. Whether food was a primary driver in their community actions, or a mixture of drivers which included food access, community development and creating alternative economies, all of those initiatives described how 'food brings people together'. This frequently-mentioned phrase can be discussed in three dimensions: first, commensality in public, second, urban food innovation and third, the power of food.

Firstly, 'commensality' refers to the act of sharing meals around a table. Although some people believed that shared meals were coming to an end as a result of a trend towards individuals eating alone, across many communities, commensality in public seemed to take on new forms and was used strategically and politically. Sharing meals together and the ways in which food and drinks were prepared, presented, and consumed, was considered a form that could "produce new ways of living and models of action within the existing real", and presenting possibilities for learning to live in the world in a better way.

In most cases, everyone was welcome to take part in sharing a meal as a way to share cultures, create bonds and break social boundaries. Indeed, commensality in public was often connected with much wider ideas about how London might become more convivial, inclusive and democratic; and foster a kind of solidarity. Commensal practices were found to be a unique space for experiences of living within a multi-culture, and, in its more general meaning, it encouraged the practice of living together with others, a kind of vibrant civic life.

What I saw were, by and large, positive and mostly benign modes of living with a 'difference' (e.g. ethnically, politically and ideologically) through material interactions of food. The social, political and cultural consequences of the common meal were manifold and varied. Commensal occasions were also tied to specific spatial settings and spatial relations among participants. For example, at the Calthorpe Project, while different ethnic groups' cooking sections were organised for engaging the growing number of single-person (especially elder people) households, cross-ethnic and inter-generational gatherings were equally popular throughout the year. The Big Lunch at Peckham was part of an annual national network of street parties which was claimed as a long British tradition, but designed as a lesson in sustainable living – promoting growing your own food, work-life balance and a response to a lost sense of community. At 'Feeding the 5000' free food was being served up to thousands of Londoners at the iconic central London landmark, Trafalgar Square, to raise awareness of the important message of food waste and how to make the most of our natural resources. And interestingly, both at Hare Krishna and at Bonnington Café, though with different spatial settings, some eaters naturally started to learn more about vegetarianism, engaging in conversations or discussions and exchanging information and so on. Many community initiatives expressed their views that food was both a means (to engage a diversity of people) and an end (e.g. sustainable food systems) towards sustainable communities.

Secondly, not only commensality in public, but also a wide range of other novel practices were revealed in London. In fact, the community food initiatives I examined have emerged, to some extent, as an incubator for new business models. In an effort to bypass large retailers, these efforts attempt to create real value and tangible incentives for

transforming the food system. New community-led trading schemes (e.g. box schemes, farmers markets, and co-ops) are constantly emerging. Some of these initiatives have been supported by Big Lottery's Local Food programme either directly or indirectly, and by other national NGOs, such as Sustain and the Soil Association. They have also been assisted by progressive local councils, notably Camden, Islington, Greenwich and Lambeth, who were themselves developing their own food strategies and initiatives. Other initiatives, such as Transition Towns and community cafés, employed the skills of everyday citizens in material and non-material transactions. For example, Transition Town Brixton created the Brixton pound, an alternative currency, to support local shops.

Apparently, London has shown advantages for urban food innovation. I have learned that London was thought to provide the critical mass of economic players, abundant opportunities for a large labour market, and the necessary social and placed-based processes for innovation to flourish, to have the ability to attract talented workers. In addition, there were natural inputs including recreational, lifestyle, media and entertainment, and favourable cultural conditions such as tolerance, diversity, and vitality. Overall, some of the community food initiatives investigated can be seen as different kinds of urban food innovation, which helped contribute social inclusion, both as a goal and a process, and included improved opportunities for interaction with diverse communities. This created social inclusive spaces; improved access to quality food; improved urban-rural linkages; inclusive economies; better labour working conditions and prospects, especially for immigrants.

Compared to other kinds of innovations such as the informative and technology-driven, urban food innovations were regarded as being more inclusive, with a relatively lower entry point even though it might mean more competition in the market. In this regard, I find the recent work on the urban creative-food economy (see Donald and Blay-Palmer, 2006) and the role of firms in developing food systems planning and sustainable cities and regions (Donald, 2008) compelling. And, in particular, the idea that new economic competitiveness demands a quality as well as an innovative dimension, with certain conditions beyond the scale of the firm, leading to a transformation where nature is urban-based.

However, while it is true that enterprises (including charity organisations) played an important role in revitalising local and creative agri-food economy, some participants I engaged with placed greater emphasis on the project-based innovations which could make good use of grassroots energy and enthusiasm and at the same time make learning-by-doing more possible through a series of small-scale projects. For instance, one participant commented:

> *I always find it useful to run a number of pilot projects to test water temperature, and also to know how difficult is the task I'm actually doing…I wouldn't suggest to anyone that they start up a new business without trying some real tasks or involving some volunteering work…sometimes I find people are just too rushy and don't have solid foundations… that's why we set up an apprenticeship programme for people who are serious about urban food growing…the power of food in shaping our surroundings should not be underestimated, but there is no use in romanticising the hard work it entails…(A member at Growing Communities).*

Thirdly, 'the power of food' has been discussed by a number of popular authors such as Colin Tudge, Wendell Berry, Carolyn Steel, and Michael Pollan, who were also

mentioned by some of the study participants. My investigation resonated with these recent works which highlight that 'the essence of food' for the majority of the world's population is not just an object of consumption, but a way of life. Its deep material and symbolic meanings actually connect nature and culture, human survival and livelihood, and the entire civilisation and the evolution of the cities around the world, from the ancient time to the present. For many community initiatives I investigated, whether explicitly or implicitly, food has become a focal point to express their concerns and visions towards a better way of living itself. The following two quotes profoundly elaborate the 'power of food' and accordingly the importance that food brings people together in shaping our 'unity of diversity'.

> *We are humans, and we grow food and growing food is one of the common things we all do if we look back at civilizations and communities…Everything about food can bring families, couples, partners, neighbours, whoever it may be, together. There is a relationship that is built when going through the process. Each of the steps in the process provides chances to forge deeper relationships with each other and with the food…There is a sense of pride and accomplishment that comes with growing your own food. It's not just about the eating, but goes much deeper than that…The most fundamental requirement for survival is food. Therefore, how and where food is grown is at the heart of an economics for the community. In so doing, you start to appreciate food that you eat and are less likely to waste food because you realise how much effort it makes to bring such food to our plate…food is the gateway to reconsider our relationship with people around us, near and far, food brings us together (A member of Transition Town Brixton).*

> *The secular world we live in has been a period of catastrophe and uncertainty…One obvious example is the concentration camps, the bombings and torture of many people in the two world wars…Yet there is a longing for a spiritual and physical communion that binds people together…Food perhaps provides a possible answer to this longing… food brings people together…how can we talk about food and love and care without thinking about poverty, inequality, and violence…how can we talk about food and love and care without embracing and celebrating our cultural differences and the things people all over the world have in common? (A volunteer at Hare Krishna, King's Cross)*

Finally, while the first quotation puts greater emphasis on individual involvement in growing food and preparing food to increase our appreciation of food in general and to foster a sense of community and the second one addresses the significance of the spiritual dimension of food in a secular urbanised world, a number of participants reminded me not to neglect the engagement with policy-making institutions and rethinking of the state and government at different levels. Although the power of food to include a broad range of stakeholders and governance actors at a community level in building some capacity for social transformation, is well recognised, it is still important to re-address the central role of government in tackling all the crises we are facing. Government support can enhance the ability of local communities and can play a leading role in facilitating experiences from one setting to be transmitted across scales and sectors. As a member of Good Food Partnership commented:

> *A lot of people believe we should empower the community to get involved, but we also have to recognise that there are limitations within communities…If you expect to see a greater influence of communities, it should be supported by provision of resources… community participation is supposed to be a good idea, but in practice, it has many*

> *problems…Seldom do community groups and individuals have a coherent vision, most of the time it's single minded when we actually need coherent planning systems and political framework to coordinate and communicate and resolve conflicts among different systems at different levels.*

Furthermore, as McMichael (2000) points out, state policies and regulations can largely resolve some legal and ethical debates such as bio-engineering, GM food and the definition of 'organic'. This was also a point raised by some of the participants. However, in order to push the government and policy-makers to take these issues into account, one pressing challenge is to bring people together through food to reclaim the shrinking democratic and political space we are entitled to exercise. Clearly, an orientation and a practice that give credence to such reclaiming are important to building capacity to bring about social changes. Whether the commons narrative can serve as one such orientation and practice and who cares about the commons in the context of community food initiatives in London will be discussed in the next section.

Who cares about the commons?

Throughout the entire investigation, I was conscious that I should reduce academic terminologies to the minimum and endeavour to make conversations and interviews flow naturally. But at times, I had to use certain words to explore people's views and 'the commons' is one of these words, enabling me to explore the level of awareness of the commons narrative among the community food initiatives and study participants. Three key issues were revealed. First, although at the time of my fieldwork I had just started to be involved in the commons in one way or another, I had gained the impression, through information from the academic and activists community, that the 'commons paradigm' was on the rise. From this perception, I was somewhat surprised that the phrase 'commons' was generally unheard of among workers of community food initiatives I investigated. Few people were familiar with the rich English history of commons and enclosures, and community asset ownership such as the Diggers Movement and the community land trust model. Certain participants pointed out the contradictory meaning of the term 'House of Commons' which in their view, was not necessarily a place that represented the majority of citizens in the country. One participant (a member at Bonnington Café) even called it a 'gated community' to emphasise that the idea of commons was not, per se, for common people. Others thought of 'common grassland' connected to an old memory, at least 40-50 years ago, when one could still see the land in London.

The term 'commons' may be unfamiliar, but nevertheless from my observation, I could see the commons wherever I went. As I have discussed earlier (in Chapter 2), the commons can be defined in two parts: it is both about reclaiming access to fundamental shared resources, as well as the democratic process that governs its usage and distribution. Therefore, what matters is not only what we share but how we share and the ways and processes in which we share the commons. These processes are known as 'commoning'. It is hardly surprising that, across the breadth of community food initiatives investigated, a large number of agri-food resources were shared by groups of individuals and/or organisations. Two concepts seemed to give rise to the popularity of agri-food commons: a growing local food movement (i.e. localised and regionalised food systems), and the development of new local economies to foster economic resilience, job creation, entrepreneurship, stewardship and community development. While not using the term, many community food initiatives were practising commons principles. This

was clearly evident in co-operative organisations such as Bonnington Café, Greenwich Cooperative Development Agency, and Organiclea. Other organisations such as Spa Hill Allotments, The Calthorpe Project, Friends of Queen's Market and guerrilla gardening events also provide various elements of commoning behaviour including collective actions for reclaiming open public green spaces and historical heritage (e.g. allotments and traditional markets).

These shared resources cover both natural commons like topsoil, water, seeds, energy, compost (and organic waste) and land, as well as the eight categories of the new commons identified by Hess (2008): culture, neighbourhood, knowledge, medicine and health, infrastructure, market, global commons. In addition to these eight categories, I found at least a further two: one was 'social commons' which gives community initiatives more chance of survival (thanks to volunteers, social networks, health care providers, activists and social/environmental campaigners) and the other category, what I would call 'wisdom and inspirational commons', which refers to a kind of universal moral core with positive human qualities including love, hope, passion, commitment to our contemporary life and the future. Similarly to the notion of 'food brings people together', I noted that food and agriculture seem to be one of the best entry points to introduce the commons, to protect, expand and celebrate all we share in common. In addition to sharing meals together (as we have seen in a previous discussion about commensality in public), many activities I saw during my fieldwork spoke volumes about the centrality of food and agriculture in the commons in London.

These activities included sharing spaces for organising events (e.g. at a green fair or an opening day), swapping seeds, exchanging recipes, learning to cook traditional cuisines, and introducing sustainable farming techniques that have been practised around the world over hundreds of years. This grassroots diversity in 'sustainable communities' attracted the creative and energetic people who want to live in a modern urban environment that suits their lifestyle. It is important to mention, however, that while there was a diversity of shared resources and the use of strong principles, such as self-organisation, inter-personal communication and consensus-building were also evident in some cases. How those resources were shared varied considerably from one community to another. This was influenced by different and complex historical, geographical, cultural, political and economic factors. For example I found that at times it was hard to avoid the issue of exclusivity and uneven distribution of power within community members and across different communities and multi-stakeholders involved.

Finally, although none of the community food initiatives I investigated framed their work as part of a commons narrative, during the fieldwork, when I explained to them what the commons referred to, most of the people concerned immediately understood and showed great interest in knowing more about this 'commons movement'. Some participants told me how the word commons has become so special to them and they have noticed that it makes so much sense in their work and thinking. For example, one participant at Friends' of Queen's Market told me:

> *Commons, commoning or commoners, these ideas are really interesting…I never heard of commons before, I mean the way you talked about it…Since I learned it [the commons] from you, I've heard this word from different sources, in the newspaper, on internet, even on radio, BBC 2 had a roundtable programme on commons in the 21st century…I started to think it must be talked about for a while, but we never used it… to go to the future you need to go to the past…I was fascinated to learn more about*

it, so I started to google it… And what struck me more is that the commons has such a long history…both the idea and the reality of the commons have been ignored for the last two centuries…It helps me to understand who carries the damage caused by local and national policies, and it also helps me gain a deeper understanding of the major disappointments and minor victories of common people trying to make their communities better. The struggle we have here [Queen's Market] is a struggle quite similar to that in history…Yet, it's not only about history...it also inspired me to think how the commons can become something good for the present and the future…A traditional food market like this one can be a local food hub for the neighbourhood as well as a catalyst for somewhere else…In our internal campaigning meeting, we even started to think how we could collaboratively address our problems and potential through the lens of the commons principles to reorganise ourselves.

Another example, a participant of a guerrilla gardening 'troop' seemed to be quite pleased to learn a new term to describe what they wanted to do. He commented:

We are neighbours and citizens in London…we are sort of tired of waiting for the city to come fix all the problems we are having. We are going to fix it ourselves and find a way to create the neighbourhood we want. When we see no one is using that vacant lot, we could sow seeds there or even plant a community garden…You have every reason to criticise that we guerrilla gardeners are chaotic and un-structural, but we are imagining the city and creating it through our own actions and our hands. We are saying that, we are better off and it's much fun and adventurous….We are in a time of extraordinary opportunity…What we do is a gesture to show that we take care of the place we live in and we want to make a place that nurtures our body and mind. The urban public spaces are ours and they are our commons.

The third example of how community food initiatives found the commons narrative inspiring was from a volunteer leader at FoodCycle. The commons enabled her to see their work on food waste management in a new way. She even, coincidentally, used a term called 'waste commons' (as referred to by Mies and Bennholdt-Thornsen, 2001), to emphasise that food, supposed to be thrown away in the supermarket, can be shared, recirculated and distributed through more community-led innovation. Her idea was that:

Food waste is not only an issue of wrong attitudes and lack of knowledge and awareness…from my experiences engaging with different communities and people working at supermarkets, most people are aware how adverse the consequences are on our planet as a result of waste and frankly people are quite embarrassed about wasting food…I think this waste issue is largely related to our everyday practices, I mean, much broader contexts of food…But the good news is that the waste commons might lead to a different understanding of the issue…we are trying to change the fate of surplus food in ways that save it from wastage…I can see Sainsbury's would love this idea…food waste commons…we receive it as a gift from whoever donated to us and we can redistribute it to those who are in need.

Finally, while the previous three examples were all positive and encouraging responses to the commons from community food initiatives, a number of study participants were quite critical about the many existing and potential challenges in the development and promotion of the commons paradigm in London. Three recurring major challenges arising during my investigation can be identified. First, "who should care about the commons?" (a member at Good Food Partnership). Study participants were interested

in knowing whether communities at large, or the state, the market or a combination of different groups should take the lead in caring about the commons? For some, the question was whether or not communities and local initiatives were able to make meaningful changes to the system without the leadership of our political leaders. For others, the emphasis of the need for leadership 'from the top' seemed to be untenable. The Copenhagen G8 Conference as well as our current political leaders, who were directing us in the opposite direction, had prompted them to think through how they might achieve the radical changes needed by working their way up and out from networks of change, rather than always hoping someone else will do something for themselves. Following the first, the second challenge was even more critical. "How can we ensure that the commons discourse will not be co-opted by the mainstream, especially during neoliberal domination?" (a worker at Organiclea). Some questioned the discourse of 'sustainable development', which has, to a large extent, been appropriated by big corporations and government. Others criticised the idea of a Big Society as an empty gesture and thought ordinary people were not the ones who would benefit from all the hard and cheap work they were asked to do by the government. Third, "If the commons is so important to our society, especially to our community", asked a volunteer at Women's Environmental Network, "how can we make the commons more common and how can we build capacity, especially among those who are most vulnerable?"

Once again I was impressed by the criticality and curiosity to know more among many of the community food initiatives and study participants. By no means could I fully answer all my study participants' questions. However, their inquiries motivated me to think more reflectively and to find ways to address some of their concerns. For the moment, as a way of concluding this final emergent category, 'Growing a new piece of the city', as well as the other three categories, I would like to provide five quotations by five different study participants. As mentioned in the methodology, I endeavoured to develop collaborative relationships with all the initiatives and my study participants during the investigation. Thus, it is important to mention that these quotations were extracted from the conversations I had with study participants over the four emergent categories, drawn from my analysis and interpretation of the complexity of the current landscape of community food initiatives in London. For me, their elaborative and reflective comments were both inspiring and encouraging.

The first quotation commented on the four titles of the emergent categories:

> *Although, as you said, we can have many ways to assemble all those raw materials you gathered, we see their complexity, in your word, I seem to see a sequence, a step forward…you must learn how to interact with others, and build up partnerships, then, you must be aware of what kind of knowledge we need, and how we get it and by whom this knowledge is produced and who benefits from this knowledge…All these activities demand a high quality of collaboration, but as we've all experienced, it's never easy…it's much more than conducting a symphony! Finally, from what you talk about 'growing a new piece of the city'; it seems to me it's like growing a commons food regime as well (A chef at Bonnington Café).*

The second quotation shows how one participant had learnt about the commons and her much broader definition of the commons, commoning and commoners:

> *What I have learned from you is that we are not only discovering the commons but we also have to invent more, we have the responsibility to protect and create the commons…Commons is everywhere, it's all around, we all share something in common…and as long as you are using them [the commons], you are a commoner… Everyone is a commoner, whether you know this word or not. You might define a commoner as someone who is following this or that rule, but in my mind, if I could extend your definition, I would say, we are all sharing something in this planet…I like to think when we are sharing something, we are actually commoning and a commoner…it's hard to find a day without involving any commons… and more critically, what kind of commons we value and how we prioritise our efforts? How can we organise our life, bridging different individuals and organisations, with our common sense for common good? (A member at Slow Food London)*

The third one raised an issue of a shared vision or a common narrative about where we are heading for a more desirable world:

> *Without a clear picture of how society can function, or how different groups of people can live together, meaningfully, without big corporate power, our resistance to that can only fail or be co-opted…I have been saying no for so long…saying no is easier and safer than saying yes. But no is not enough for a new world…Our first challenge is to create a common narrative that will bring our stories together into a richer, more inclusive whole… People involved with the food sovereignty movement are doing this, Transition Town is doing this and many other kinds of social movements…and I would say most of the communities you are engaging with might have similar visions [creating a common narrative]. Probably we shouldn't aim for a single vision…That's why I'm quite intrigued by your idea of care… Reflecting on your work, that's got me thinking that maybe we can combine food movements and commons movements, through cultivating a caring culture, that does not need a revolution, but subtle changes in attitude and scope (A member of SOAS Food Studies).*

The fourth quotation reminded me of being critical of certain sound-positive terms when we use them to describe our visions and the importance of resources in capacity building:

> *London can be a perfect laboratory for all kinds of experiments in learning and collaboration…however, we need to be careful about the language we use…We like to believe that terms like sustainability, community participation, and empowerment are all positive, but you know, sometimes unframed or wrongly framed empowerment can be even worse…people can be empowered to do bad things…the consequences can be more destructive…On the other hand, how to get enough resources is the key, we can't naively think that we just need ideas, we need real power and real material conditions…In the current economic climate, it's tough to get financial support… And yet, what's interesting about your proposal of the commons is its being flexible and adaptive and innovative, building our capacity…you navigate change whenever possible, but never forget that the neoliberal system is untenable…rather than only filling gaps left by those supermarkets and influential institutions, like the WTO, we must work with the beasts, something much bigger also has to be transformed (A member at UK Food Sovereignty Movement).*

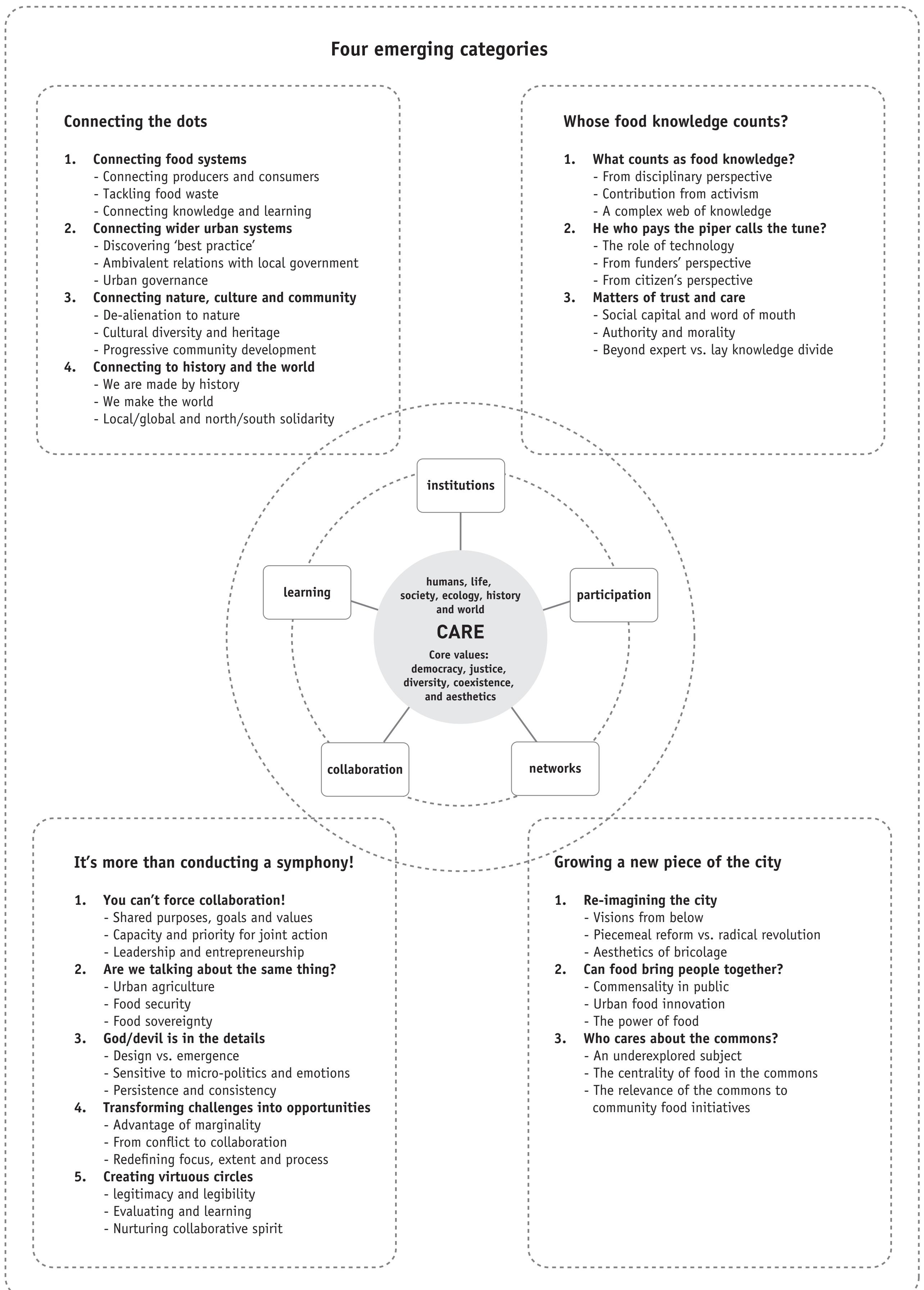
The final quotation offered an interpretation of what this study participant thought about the relationship between community food initiatives and a commons food regime

and compared his experience with cooperative movements and his idea of how to make commons more common:

> *From what you have explained to me, I have an idea…Can I say that those community food initiatives you have been to are a kind of prototype of a commons food regime in your mind? I'm sure that you've already got a lot from engaging with so many communities and people…What's the next step? In cooperative movements, it's not only about people working together in a co-op, we also try to help others to set up their co-ops, like workers co-ops or consumers co-ops, try to scale up and scale out, but at each scale, we will face different challenges…How to make commons more common if you ask me…With so many existing movements, I'm not sure it would be a good idea to compete with so many to get people's attention to a new movement…You don't have to name things too quickly...Do a lot and let more people know what you are doing, showing them some good examples, and you say this is x, y, z…People like to see concrete cases, not abstract concepts…I'd say we should start to map out spaces for commoning, at all scales and all levels, opening up as many fronts as possible… we need to learn from our victories as well as our failures (An officer at Greenwich Cooperative Development Agency).*

Before we can start to map out places and spaces for commoning, as suggested by my study participant, at this moment it is crucial to be aware of what we have already had throughout the investigation. However, what we have already known is always tentative and situated. As Haraway's (1991) states, the concept of 'situated knowledges', provides "particularly powerful tools to produce maps of consciousness for people who have been inscribed within the marked categories" (p.190). In this regard, I would like to present the quilt (Figure 3.3) as a kind of situated knowledge, which hopefully can inspire more people to see things in a different light and make connections to the complexity of the current landscape of community food initiatives in London. The quilt can be seen as a representation of communal collaboration between those community food initiatives and study participants with whom I engaged with, which was only made possible with shared love, caring and warmth towards one another.

Figure 3.4: The complexity of the current landscape of community food initiatives in London



3.4 Conclusions and implications from the investigation

The overarching aim of this research project, documented in this chapter, was to investigate the current landscape of community food initiatives as a way to understand the general context of where a regime is situated. The investigation was aimed to explore how we can grow a commons food regime by learning from community food initiatives in London. Using the integrative framework as 'a tool of insight' and having progressed through different stages of investigation (e.g. looking across the fields, mapping and categorising and selecting case studies), along with a combination of research designs (e.g. multi-sited ethnography and case studies), and research methods (e.g. participatory observation and interviews), I have gained substantial knowledge and understanding of their objectives, capacity, challenges, opportunities and strategies relevant to growing a commons food regime in London. A number of conclusions can be made from my investigation.

First, the findings confirmed my initial assumption that even though individual community food initiatives do not have all the elements available, taking them together as a whole, they demonstrated greater potential to grow a commons food regime more effectively in London. A diverse variety of components relevant to growing a commons food regime has been revealed through these community food initiatives and study participants I engaged with. However, though these components are useful, they are not fulfilling their full potential, which can prompt us to reflect on how, collectively, we can grow a commons food regime more effectively in London by making more strategic use of these existing resources and using our knowledge more strategically.

Second, the term 'commons' and 'commons movements' were unfamiliar to most of the community food initiatives and study participants before my introduction and explanation. However, once they understood my ideas of the commons and growing a commons food regime, many of them expressed that a commons narrative and ethos were relevant to what they were doing and to their visions. Some of them started to be more aware of the development of the commons and even elaborated its scope and meanings creatively and provocatively.

Third, as the previous section reveals, identification of attributes to key elements of commoning dynamics, in as far as they relate to capacity building and governance, are multifaceted and complex. It is challenging to pinpoint a single set of processes, challenges, opportunities and strategies that guarantee the effectiveness of growing a commons food regime in London. Nevertheless, I would like to offer a summary of those insights and key learning from my investigation, which can help identify implications relevant for future research and practice. I make no claim that this list is exhaustive and recognise that others might end up with a somewhat different list. This list lays out the key set of knowledge which I believe can indicate ways forward for growing a commons food regime more effectively in London.

Care is the core

From a methodological perspective, investigation with care proves extremely important. While no single case study or participant covered the six different care-receivers (humans, society, life, ecology, history and the world) detailed in the integrative

framework, care is nonetheless a well understood and often-cited concept. Similarly, associated values such as democracy, justice, diversity, coexistence, and aesthetics were also discussed and/or practised, both individually and collectively. Given the amount and quality of like-minded communities and people with their common wisdom, it was important to continue engagement with them, and for them to reveal their living experiences and achieve the power of care in action. However, equally important was to address issues such as personal attitudes and capacity, and the institutional arrangements needed to foster a caring culture and community.

Diversifying institutions

The selection of the case studies demonstrated a diversity of institutions of community food initiatives in London, with different organisational infrastructures, rules, ideologies, norms and values. As expected, many kinds of food-related resources, both tangible (e.g. food, community gardens, tools, funds, locations, volunteers, etc.) and intangible (knowledge, networks, trust, respect, art, and memory, etc.) were shared, derived from a large number of incentives and motivations (e.g. rational and/or relational and emotionally driven choices) and scales (e.g. community, neighbourhood, networked organisations, city wide, regional, translocal, and international). Varied decision-making processes and mechanisms were revealed, ranging from a mixture of democratic consensus building to more of an authoritarian kind. The processes of rules-making were dynamic and blurred and it is hard to assess when one rule was made to replace another, and many decisions were made informally and in an unwritten form. This implies a more insider engagement to observe and evaluate the evolution of institutional arrangements in order to make appropriate adjustments over time. Additionally, while I encountered initiatives and study participants who shared more radical visions (e.g. an anti-capitalist perspective), gradual effects (piecemeal reforms) were more common. Therefore, harnessing this relatively softer approach with a radical vision could reach a wider audience who might be interested in growing a commons food regime.

Creating platforms for facilitated community participation

All community food initiatives recognised the importance of widening community participation by focusing on food education, policy and advocacy as well as working for progressive community development. While issues around inclusion and diversity were still evident, using food as a means to engage with communities seemed to be more effective than actually challenging current neoliberal food systems. Perhaps at the moment it is more important to harness people's enthusiasm first, but at the same time build strategic alliances with individuals and organisations who are more concerned with the wider issues of food security/food sovereignty and public health, the imbalance of power relations and the notion of transformative food citizenship. Since relational and safe spaces were helpful for increasing participation, there may be an opportunity and a need to create platforms for deeper civic participation and democratic deliberation, which may also lead to some dynamic networking and social learning opportunities. Furthermore, since the public (both communities and individuals) take time to understand and adopt a certain language, a more effective communication which can enhance interactions, dialogues and potential collaborations is also critical to growing a commons food regime.

Forming networks of actors and actants

While community food initiatives enjoy a level of autonomy for fulfilling their visions and goals, it is evident that no single community food initiative can possess all the knowledge, experience, and resources necessary to address complex and connected challenges posed by the current neoliberal food systems. My investigation indicates that a greater emphasis should be placed on fostering connections between interventions, and warns against suggestions that certain interventions will inherently lead to better outcomes. There is also a need to engage across all levels – individuals, action groups, organisations, networked organisations and beyond (i.e. society). There is some evidence to suggest that these initiatives could serve as 'hubs' for bridging community organisations in helping to build capacity. This requires strategic co-ordination and linking of organisations and people – connecting the dots – with a more comprehensive and coherent path of action. It is also to do with functioning on the edges to find common ground to foster and sustain relational spaces and governance networks. Finally, the relational aspects of food networks should not be undermined in practice. To a large extent, the findings illustrate the fact that the neoliberal context and these community food initiatives in London are mutually constituted (e.g. between the local/ the global, nature/culture, markets/social movements). Therefore, how we can creatively take advantage of these kinds of hybridity and co-existing relations, especially through stretching the potentials of connecting place and space as well as humans (actors) and non-humans (actants) to increase adaptive capacity, may be an effective way to grow a commons food regime in London.

Generating virtuous circles for collaboration

Most types of collaboration were seen as being positive. However, cross-boundary collaboration and creating greater synergies through virtuous circles were much less common than expected. This might be due to cultural, political, economic and other barriers to increasing collaboration; for example, finding shared motivations and the lack of sufficient human capacity, time, and financial resources. Overcoming these barriers will be important for increasing the size and scale of collaborations. To that end, incorporating a more inclusive gendered perspective to play the role of mediator, integrator, and synthesiser for convergence of differences might be useful to help nurture a collaborative spirit. More importantly, many initiatives put greater emphasis on the quality of collaboration over quantity (scale) which highlighted how great things can be achieved by generating and sustaining a series of small but positive changes over time. Furthermore, from my investigation, the role of power, legitimacy and legibility are also key factors in the self-organisation of networks prepared to build institutions and adapt to change. Drawing on this insight, consideration could be made to growing a commons food regime through catalyst initiatives in London.

Building collective knowledge and learning

One of the more unexpected and interesting findings from the community food initiatives and study participants was the diversity of types and resources of food knowledge they had, and their reflective, critical and constructive attitudes towards different forms of knowledge and ways of learning. While there were some innovative and transformative ways of knowing and learning available, different and sometimes competing discourses seemed to lead to divergence, instead of convergence, among community sectors. Although combining different types of knowledge for learning is

critical in building adaptive capacity for growing a commons food regime, important questions remained unresolved, particularly in relation to, first, London's position on food and agriculture and how the current situation is being presented, and second, issues of food security, food sovereignty, and the connection between the natural and social sciences with regard to adaptive capacity in complex social-ecological systems. At one level, due to an absence of a shared vision (or visions) of London's position in food issues, it is difficult to prioritise resources to address knowledge gaps and develop long-term research and learning development planning. At another level, knowledge itself is a dynamic process which requires a power analysis with basic questions such as why, what, how, and who to know and learn. It is a critical issue to encourage dialogues to foster imaginative and effective ways to discover how different forms of knowledge and learning processes can work for collective benefit.

Fulfilling the role of university

Finally, as an academic-activist, I take the view that the university plays an important role in helping to form multiple and reciprocal connections with society that can result in more desirable governance (Delanty, 2001:152). From my investigation, however, universities seemed to miss the opportunity to play such an important role. In this sense, I consider that the academic-activist can serve as a bridge to bring the university world closer to the outside world and the outside world into the university (Andrews in Elliott et al., 1996:116), as well as helping to connect our surrounding local community with the global context. We need to ask ourselves, "How can we create spaces and conversations that extend past or beyond our research encounters?", and also "How can we open up universities and academic research so they become embedded in the practice of this critical civil society?" (Chatterton et al., 2007:222). Given the diversity of resources, knowledge and networks the universities possess, as a starting point, I am convinced that there is a scope and an opportunity for universities to grow a commons food regime as a catalyst. As an experiment, special attention is required in developing robust and reflective evaluation mechanisms of the entire process of growing a commons food regime in order to obtain a better understanding of its impacts in building adaptive capacity for navigating change towards sustainable food systems, sustainable communities and cities and a wider scope of social-ecological sustainability. Considerable effort is needed to integrate knowledge and open up spaces for deliberation, reflection, collaboration and innovation. In this regard, promoting an action-oriented research becomes more relevant as it provides a framework that gives credence to the dialectic between theory and practice with explicit aims of creating social change.

Final concluding remarks

As Bal and Boer state, "Theory only makes sense as an attitude; otherwise the generalisation of the very concept of 'theory' is pointless" (1994:8). As, I believe, has come through on every page, I am an evangelist and an enthusiast for community food movements. The integrative framework as 'a tool of insight' helped me explore the complexity of our food system with common sense and in a rigorous and systematic manner. But while I kept reminding myself of the fundamental importance of taking a holistic view, there was always some limit. Each initiative was complex, let alone the current landscape of community food initiatives as a whole, and any investigation, however insightful, would always emphasise some things and ignore others. This is almost like something of an art, since it is all about how to see the forest and the trees,

how to know what level of detail to get into but also when to stop, how best to capture the essence of complex situations (Sherwood, 2002), and more importantly, how to recognise and accept that 'we know of the unknowable' (Flood, 2008).

Wisdom, as an innate characteristic, is rare. But we all can learn how to care and trust and open up the doors to let each other in. For me, this concept of care was particularly helpful to understand a relatively decentralised structure and somewhat diffuse overall goals, and where the various community food initiatives in London had their own vision of what was important and what were their priorities. I was working together with them in ways in which an 'ethic of care is paramount' (Denzin, 2003:122). This caring attitude took on an almost mantra-like quality, a certain spiritual power and the entire investigation was a learning process on how to listen to and care for others deeply. In so doing, we might become wiser gradually. Indeed, this care was an attitude that was brought to our own practice, which will be introduced in the next chapter, in growing a commons food regime through a journey of university-led community food initiatives at University College London.

Chapter 4:
Growing a Commons Food Regime in Practice through a University-led Community Food Initiative at UCL, London

UCL: London's Global University
(Source: UCL Media Relations)

4.1 Introduction: responding to and learning from the investigation in London

A tree as big as a man's embrace springs from a tiny sprout.
A tower nine stories high begins with a heap of earth.
A journey of a thousand leagues starts from where your feet stand.
(Lao-Tzu, translated by Wu, 2006:145)

By examining the current landscape of community food initiatives in London, the previous chapter demonstrated that London has great potential to grow a commons food regime in practice. However, as one of the conclusions suggested, if we want to grow a commons food regime more effectively, we need to make better use of existing knowledge and resources particularly relating to the practice of care, strategic planning, commoning dynamics, and commoning outcomes and evaluation. This chapter will explore and document how the integrative framework – 'a tool of insight' – used in Chapter 3 can be applied for growing a commons food regime in practice. The analysis will allow us to deepen the understanding of growing a commons food regime through a practice in a more specific context. This underscores the dynamic nature of growing this food regime, as it is constantly being adapted and reconstituted in the places it evolves in. This practice also represents a way of testing the relevance of the integrative framework.

Due to limited time and resources, it is important to note that the practice undertaken in this thesis was only a small-scale experiment, echoing Lao-Tzu's statement that "a journey of a thousand leagues starts from where your feet stand". Therefore, this experiment of growing a commons food regime was based solely on my own university – UCL. This was a response to one of the gaps identified during previous investigations, namely, that universities were not fulfilling an important role in helping to form multiple and reciprocal connections with society that could result in more desirable governance systems (Delanty, 2001:152). There were four main reasons for this strategic decision. Firstly, UCL, established in 1826, was one of the first universities to open its doors to students of any race, class and religion in England. Today, UCL claims to be London's Global University, with founding principles and a university ethos aimed at addressing real-world problems through academic excellence and research[1].

Secondly, recent educational policies also made UCL a promising site for growing a commons food regime. UCL strives collectively to tackle complex ideas that require breadth and range of expertise. There are policies and programmes that help students to carry out research with an impact and commitment to building sustainable communities. For example, as a central feature of its research strategy, UCL Grand Challenges[2] "is the mechanism through which concentrations of specialist expertise across UCL and beyond can be brought together to address aspects of the world's key problems. It also provides an environment in which researchers are encouraged to think about how their work can intersect with and impact upon global issues". Another example, the UCL Public Engagement Unit[3] , aims to develop an effective public engagement which informs research, enhances teaching and encourages mutual learning between the university and elsewhere, and increases the impact on society. University and community engagement has been identified as an emergent field in the UK which highlights "a value-driven

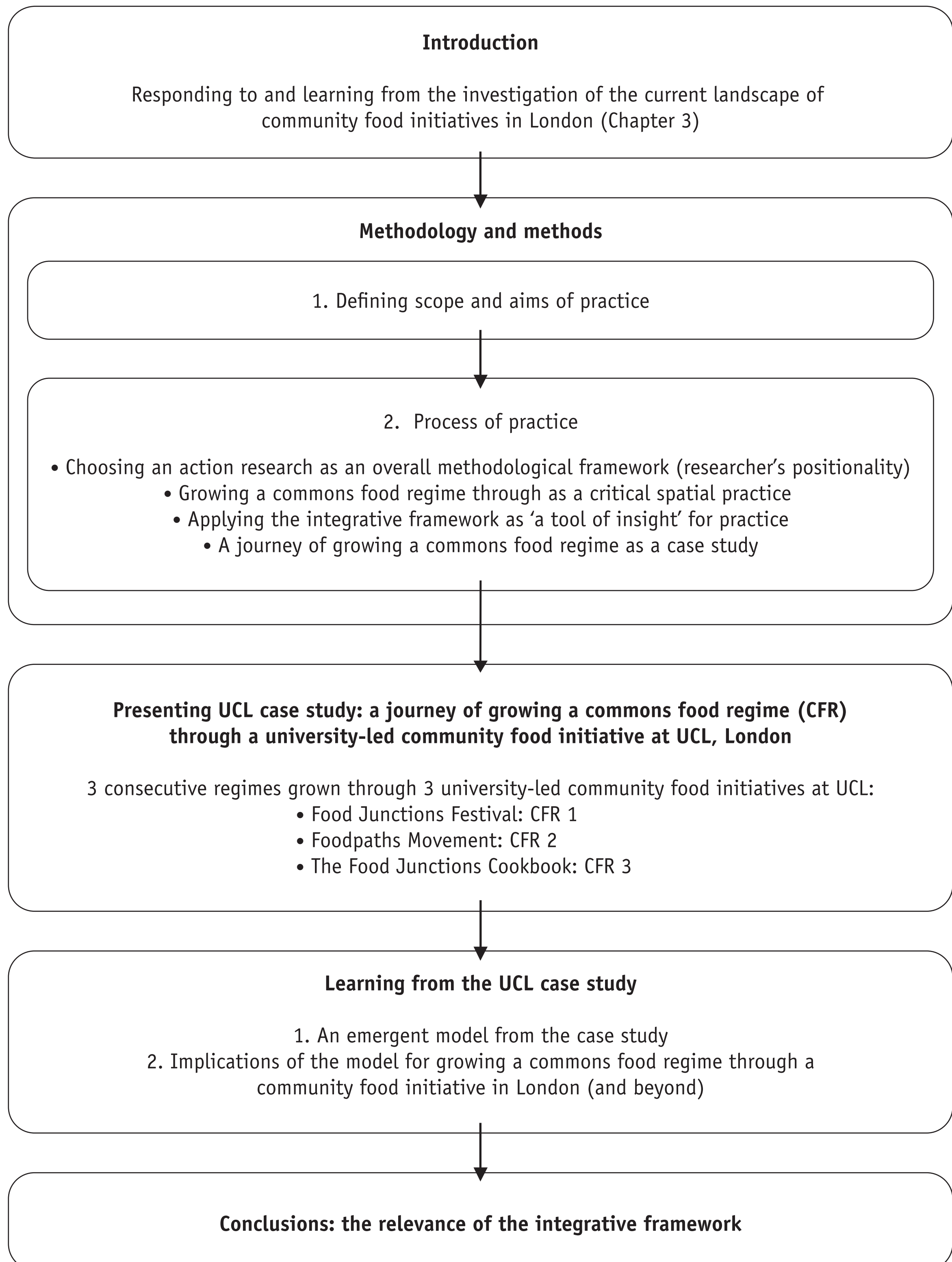
(1) See http://www.ucl.ac.uk/about-ucl
(2) See http://www.ucl.ac.uk/grand-challenges
(3) See http://www.ucl.ac.uk/public-engagement

mutually beneficial process of respectful negotiation and practice with partners outside the university” (Farrar and Taylor, 2009:247).

Thirdly, to put it more straightforwardly, as a PhD student at UCL, I have involved myself in a number of collaborative research projects focusing on agro-food issues, such as food security, rights-based approaches to food sovereignty, urban agriculture in London, and creating a sustainable campus within UCL. In so doing, I have already had access to available resources and networks at UCL. These experiences, combined with the investigation of the current landscape of community food initiatives in London, helped me throughout this project.

This chapter begins by outlining the methodology and methods used to grow a commons food regime in practice. Applying the integrative framework as ‘a tool of insight’, it outlines the scope and aims of the practice. An action research methodology is explained, followed by an introduction to the research design (i.e. critical spatial practice and case study). I will then describe the step-by-step account of the practice as well as the methods adopted with each stage of the process. Section 4.3 describes the case study – a journey of growing three consecutive commons food regimes through three university-led community food initiatives at UCL. Section 4.4 presents two levels of learning from the case study, firstly, an emergent model of growing a commons food regime from the case study and secondly, the implications from the model for growing a commons food regime through a community food initiative in London. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the relevance of the integrative framework for growing a commons food regime (see Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1: Organisation of Chapter 4
Growing a commons food regime in practice through a university-led community food initiative at UCL, London



4.2 Methodology and methods

4.2.1 Defining scope and aims of practice

Scope of practice: growing a commons food regime through a university-led community food initiative

The practice of growing a commons food regime was designed as a small-scale experimental intervention through university-led community food initiatives. More specifically, this kind of university-led community food initiative was an event-based initiative. Three particular reasons justified this approach.

Firstly, based on my investigation, event-based community food initiatives were the most popular and vibrant category among all kinds of initiatives in London. Following the wisdom gained from those communities and study participants I engaged with, I took the view that much could be achieved through a series of small projects, i.e. event-based community food initiatives – the smallest scale (in terms of size, level and timeframe) of a 'commons regime'. Secondly, inspired by Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy, which aims "to become worthy of the event" (1994:160), I took this kind of 'event' as a method of inquiry by exploring how to fulfil its potential. Not only did I aim to describe how we organised an event and what was happening, but also, at the same time, wanted to recognise the transformative effects of those happenings (ibid:139). Thirdly, if we agree that an event is a new project, the practice of growing a commons food regime through a university-led community food initiative provides an example of Marsden's (2000) 'governance through projects'.

In summary, the aims of practice were as follows:

Aims of practice

1. To explore and describe how we can grow a commons food regime in practice through a journey of university-led community food initiatives at UCL as a case study
2. To gain a deeper understanding of growing a commons food regime from the case study
3. To identify implications resulting from the case study for growing a commons food regime through a community food initiative in London
4. To assess the relevance of the integrative framework for growing a commons food regime through the case study

4.2.2 Process of practice

Choosing action research as an overall methodological framework

> *I now believe that Action Research is as much a process of asking questions about one's practice as it is deciding what to do about solutions. Action Research enables you to live your questions; in a way, they become the focal point of your thinking… Action Research is an attitude or becomes an attitude that is brought to one's practice (Battaglia, 1995:89).*

With my academic-activist identity, I chose action research as an overall methodological framework for four major reasons. Firstly, action research, as its name suggests, is intended to produce both change ('action' and/or 'practice') and understanding ('research' and/or 'theory'). Action research is often undertaken with an explicit motivation to enact changes in a given social structure, often related to social and environmental justice and emancipation (Reason and Bradbury, 2001; Kindon et al., 2007).

Secondly, an 'extended epistemology' in action research sees knowledge as more valid if our knowing is grounded in experience (experiential knowing), expressed through our stories and images (presentational knowing), and understood through theories which make sense to us (propositional knowing), and expressed in worthwhile action in our lives (practical knowing) (Heron & Reason, 2008). 'Participation' and 'collaboration' are also central to most action research processes (Herr and Anderson, 2005). Reason and Bradbury (2008:7) argue that to conduct participatory action research, researchers have to employ a participatory perspective or worldview, which "asks us to be both situated and reflexive, to be explicit about the perspective from which knowledge is created, to see inquiry as a process of coming to know, serving the democratic, practical ethos of action research". Such a perspective opens up spaces for different forms of knowledge generation through methodological innovation and political action.

Thirdly, my choice of action research relates to the term 'praxis', which is concerned with the dialectics between theory and action (Reason and Bradbury, 2008). In contrast to other research paradigms (i.e. positivism) which emphasise that the validity of research must be grounded in 'value-neutral' objectivity, action research begins with an overt desire to implement informed changes in some existing social arrangement. Reason and Bradbury state that, "action without reflection is blind, just as theory without action is meaningless" (2008:4). As such, the concept of praxis, that knowledge is derived from committed action, and committed action informed by knowledge, in a continuous process, is at the centre of action research.

Finally, the action research cycle is compatible with the integrative framework for growing a commons food regime. One of the most significant characteristics of each cycle rests on whether the researcher consciously and constantly holds a 'dialectical' attitude and operates between action and reflection (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010). From a systems theory perspective, the action research cycle can be seen as an example of 'self-organised process', in which a small set of critical processes that characterise the development of complex adaptive systems is exhibited. The feedback loops that emphasise the importance of the ongoing learning process are evident in both action research and the integrative framework.

Within this action research approach, it is worth mentioning the importance of the researcher's positionality. The positionality, like the identity of the researcher, plays an important role in any research project. This is particularly so in action research as the focus of research is on social change. Herr and Anderson (2005) propose a 'continuum of positionality' of insider-outsider to assess the relationship the researchers have with their research participants or organisations/community. However, insider-outsider positionality is only one of many ways to think about positionality, as it also occurs in terms of "one's position in the organizational or social hierarchy and one's position of power vis-à-vis other stakeholders inside and outside the setting" (ibid:41). While these categories may overlap in practice, and action researchers may take on multiple and shifting positionalities over the course of a given project, I have to emphasise that the positionality taken in this research was predominantly an insider approach but constantly sought to form reciprocal collaboration with both insiders and outsiders whenever possible. In other words, this research is neither solely a self-inquiry research project nor is it a traditional participatory action research project. This is for three major reasons.

Firstly, although we have engaged with hundreds of communities and thousands of participants during the course of our practices, I was the only person who made important decisions about which direction my research was taking. However, unlike conventional self-inquiry action research whose focus is solely on the researcher herself, this research was undertaken to "integrate the personal and the political, the micro and the macro, voices in the mainstream of policy debate with those from the margins" (Reason and Bradbury, 2008:xxvii).

Secondly, again, it is important to remind ourselves that this research was conducted within a PhD programme. On the one hand I had to consider practical issues such as timing, adjusting methodology in response to different stakeholders' expectations, including community organisations and individuals' visions and academic requirement. On the other hand, the level of analysis and interpretation might not be a priority for some participants who would want more directly applicable information. All these issues made a truly participatory action research very difficult.

Thirdly, the practices were closely related to a system-wide transformational change programme at UCL, where a broad commitment was made to reflect on experience and learning. In this regard, our practices became active participation and collaboration between myself (the researcher and the practitioner), the university and a large number of members of the public and community organisations. As a consequence, I realised our projects had some impact beyond academic theorising alone, which rested on, according to Coghlan and Brannick (2010), one of the most complex and challenging kind of action research in one's own organisation. Fortunately, even though my research was fully supported by the university, I enjoyed an independent environment to develop my research which has reduced the pressure to deal with competing demands.

Growing a commons food regime as a critical spatial practice

> *Every human being is an artist, a freedom being, called to participate in transforming and reshaping the conditions, thinking and structures that shape and inform our lives (Beuys, cited in Social Sculpture Research Unit, www.socialsculpture.org.uk).*

While action research provided an overall framework for our practices of growing a commons food regime, inspired by Beuys's idea of 'social sculpture' and Deleuze and Guaratti's 'event as an inquiry' (1994), from the outset, we (due to our partial participatory research) took up the challenge set by Hinchliffe and Whatmore (2006) to build a form of intervention in the world, opening up rather than pinning down. As for practice, we used a constellation of methods to communicate our messages and engage with wider participants and create new spaces for analysis and reflections. In a way, it was an attempt to merge social science methods with a broadly defined contemporary art practice, aspiring to build new connections between theory and practice with an accent on creativity, challenging the conventional thesis of social science.

In this regard, I considered Rendell's (2008) 'critical spatial practice' appropriate to provide a complementary perspective to the action research framework. Therefore, growing a commons food regime can be seen as a critical spatial practice. The appropriateness of our practice can be justified by its 'critical' and 'spatial' aspects. Growing a commons food regime served to engage with both everyday activities and creative practices which sought to resist the dominant social order of global corporate capitalism. Growing a commons food regime also related to the extended meaning of the term 'critical' in critical spatial practice, as defined through critical theory into practice – those critical practices that involved social critique, self-reflection and social change. Furthermore, special attention was paid to the spatial dimension in our growing a commons food regime for two reasons. First, space provided a helpful means of negotiation, cooperation and producing social relationships. Second, place, space and scales were dominant themes in our practice of growing a commons food regime. In addition, like critical spatial practice incorporating elements of public art where aesthetic organisation is highly valued, learning from insights of community food initiatives in London, growing a commons food regime also elaborated the idea of the 'aesthetics of bricolage' aiming at creating new communities and ways of thinking, showing and making different relationship through using the resources at hand with careful aesthetic consideration.

I took this more performative approach as an example of 'presentational knowing' (Heron & Reason, 2008), which allows me to challenge convention and to tell a compelling story which can enhance the relevance and impact of the research, allowing readers "to feel the moral dilemmas, think with our story instead of about it, join actively in the decision points" (Ellis and Bochner, 2000:735). I realise that there is always something going on and the process then becomes an 'ecology of learning' (Blewitt, 2006:xiii).

Applying the integrative framework as 'a tool of insight' for practice

While the current landscape of community food initiatives in London was the first layer of the general context, UCL was the second layer – a specific context – for growing a commons food regime through a university-led community food initiative. Each section (4.3.1, 4.3.2, and 4.3.3) represents an individual practice of growing such a regime. Taking the integrative framework as 'a tool of insight', in turn, we focused on three key dimensions, namely, strategic planning, commoning dynamics and commoning outcomes and evaluations, in which each section followed iterative cycles consisting of these three parts in sequence. Put together, a journey of growing a commons food regime through a university-led community food initiative at UCL was undertaken. Although the three regimes (Food Junctions Festival, Foodpaths Movement, and *The Food Junctions*

Cookbook) grown one after the other, changes never appeared in a linear manner. The three parts within each iterative cycle in sequence had sub-sets of objectives listed below.

1. Strategic planning:
   To initially describe each commons food regime, I give a brief account of how we addressed the three distinct questions of (1) understanding where we are; (2) figuring out where to go; and (3) developing strategies for how to get there.

2. Commoning dynamics:
   I then document the entire process of how the five key elements of commoning dynamics, namely, institutions, participation, networks, collaboration and learning, played out and interacted in each cycle of growing a commons food regime.

3. Commoning outcomes and evaluation:
   Through interviews, participatory observation, surveys and questionnaires, I evaluate the commoning outcomes in terms of contents, processes and impacts based on the original vision and goals. I also describe how we dealt with multiple evaluation mechanisms with different constructions and criteria of 'success' due to its multi-stakeholders' involvement. Finally, I offer our learning at different levels and reflections from the practices and ways forward.

Methods in research and practice

In attempting to grow a commons food regime more effectively, a large number of methods were adopted along lines to create new forms of participatory research that connect people and place, as well as innovative routes to foster, share and disseminate learning for multiple purposes and at multiple levels.

In addition to conventional qualitative methods of generating material, including participatory observations, semi-structured interviews, surveys/questionnaires, email correspondence, document collation and reviews, two particular forms of methods were worth mentioning in greater detail, namely, 'serial interviews' and 'co-operative inquiry' with the former emphasising the importance of the evolving characteristics of the journey, and the latter showing the collaboration in our work.

The first of these methods, serial interviews, refers to 'serial' or 'repetitive' ways of growing a commons food regime. As our initiatives evolved over time, I realised what shifting roles different 'stakeholders' played, from one initiative to another. I believe it was a unique opportunity to investigate closely how these stakeholders experienced their engagement with our initiatives at different stages. Here, stakeholders refer mainly to five different groups: (1) core team members; (2) funders; (3) partners; (4) contributors; and (5) public participants. It is interesting to see how a public participant in one initiative later became a core team member and, in reverse, a core team member became a public participant. Those serial inquiries enabled me to reflect on what changes took place and what had been learned among these stakeholders.

Baldwin (2001) suggests there are benefits in using co-operative inquiry, the second method mentioned above, for exploring issues of mutual interest. He states, "If the aim is to achieve transformation in behaviour rather than just a confirmation of how things are, then the way in which co-operative inquiry ensures ownership of learning within the direct meaning and experience of participating individuals provides a very

high likelihood of successful outcome" (ibid:235). Rather than the inquiry focusing on people, it works with people. This democratic approach to inquiry made it ideal for exploring these topics, particularly in the grassroots, community-led and self-organising events like ours. One of the key features of this method is that it tends to share the results, analysis, interpretation more with multi-stakeholders involved. I employed this method only with some of the core team members and key partners in the three initiatives because it was an intensive and ongoing collaborative process during which our projects were shaped and constructed. This is not to say that the other stakeholders were not equally important, but the outcomes, I thought, best suited to express our collective actions most vividly and communicatively. Also, it was literally impossible for me to conduct co-operative inquiries with our thousands of stakeholders. Furthermore, it is not too difficult to imagine that in some cases there was some overlapping with whom I made of both serial and co-operative inquiries, which can be seen as an indicator of the continuity of our public engagement.

A journey of growing a commons food regime as a case study

A journey of growing a commons food regime in practice through a university-led community food initiative at UCL is the case study for this piece of research. Not only did the inductive, interpretative and qualitative approach, adopted within this study, underlie the process of material generation, but it also framed the analysis undertaken. The analysis of the case study was also used to construct a conceptual framework as a way of gaining a deeper understanding of growing a commons food regime through university-led community food initiatives. This analytical approach was inspired by the evaluation officer at the UCL Public Engagement Unit, Dr. Gemma Moore and her PhD thesis (Moore, 2010) on engagement-driven urban regeneration. In effect, this can be seen as one of the many examples that produced close relationships and mutual learning between funding organisation and grants recipients.

Table 4.1 provides a summary of adopted methodology and methods for generating material with the main outputs of each stage. Overall, this process has generated a significant quality of material to enable me to tell a compelling story and to gain a deeper understanding of our UCL case study.

The UCL case study			A journey of growing a commons food regime (CFR) through a university-led community food initiative at UCL		
Practice • Choosing an action research methodological framework • Growing a commons food regime as a critical spatial practice			Food Junctions Festival (CFR 1)	Foodpaths Movement (CFR 2)	The Food Junctions Cookbook (CFR 3)
Methods	**When**	**With whom**	**Outputs**[4]		
Participant observations with field-note entries[5]	• Strategic planning; • Commoning dynamics; • Commoning outcomes and evaluation	• All multi-stakeholders	102	58	49
Document reviews (hard and electronic copies)	• Strategic planning; • Commoning dynamics; • Commoning outcomes and evaluation	• Funders • Partners	37	22	19
Surveys/ questionnaires	• Commoning dynamics; • Commoning outcomes and evaluation	• Contributors • Public participants	38	54	-
Email Communication	• Strategic planning; • Commoning dynamics • Commoning outcomes and evaluation	• All multi-stakeholders	729	496	688
Semi-structured interviews	• Commoning outcomes and evaluation	• All multi-stakeholders	21 (5 core team members; 2 funders; 2 partners; 7 contributors; 5 public participants)	16 (3 core team members; 1 funder; 4 partners; 5 contributors; 3 public participants)	19 (2 core team member; 2 funders; 3 partners; 6 contributors; 7 public participants)
Serial interviews	• Commoning outcomes and evaluation	• All multi-stakeholders	-	6 (1 core team member; 1 funder; 1 partner; 1 contributor; 2 public participants)	8 (1 core team member; 1 funders; 4 contributors; 2 public participants)
Co-operative inquiries	• Strategic planning; • Commoning dynamics • Commoning outcomes and evaluation	• Core team members • Key partners	3	3	2

Table 4.1 A summary of adopted methodology and methods

(4) Outputs included the number of people involved or the number of data entries.
(5) Ongoing activities included meetings, gardening, cooking, eating, workshops, film screening, discussions, presentations, walking tours, mapping, dancing, conferences, symposiums, and networking events.

4.2.3 Limitations of research and practice

There are a number of limitations in this work, both in terms of theory and methods used.

Firstly, given that the practices inherited the nature of complex systems in being unpredictable and non-linear, research on them was subject to a number of potential problems. While I endeavoured to take into account diverse views and experiences, this thesis was written on my own. Despite my intention to thoroughly and accurately portray the situation of our practices, it was impossible for me to fully observe the diverse array of relationships and activities. A related issue was that this research undoubtedly reflected my normative views on change, either directly or indirectly through my emphasis on certain sources, cases and conclusions.

Secondly, as a kind of action research, where both practice and research were desirable outcomes, the three commons food regimes we grew were extremely demanding within a normal PhD student's capacity, particularly given that all these undertakings were carried out in a collaborative manner which made the task even more challenging. Operating within this tight timescale imposed a limit to the number of interviews that could be conducted. As a result, there can be no claims that these findings are representative of the wider population.

Thirdly, while the case study was a valid research design within the social sciences, due to the nature of an inductive, interpretative approach, the emergent model from the case study was mainly aimed at gaining an insight into strategic planning, commoning dynamics, and commoning outcomes and evaluation of growing a commons food regime through a university-led community food initiative at UCL. Although learning from the UCL case study is useful, it is important to note that the case study presented here only reflects a specific context. Thus, it is still early days for making a conclusive assessment of the relevance of the integrative framework. However, these limitations may well provide the impetus to conduct future research and practices to achieve a more refined analysis and interpretation.

4.3 The UCL case study

This is a particular kind of a journey, yet one made amid the ebbs and flows of people, disciplines, communities and ideas in a globalised world. It tells us how we came together to share a passion for food and all that it means, and how that passion was translated into action. It was a journey of three commons food regimes that we helped to grow in the form of 'critical spatial practice' through three university-led community food initiatives at UCL. These were experiences of embodied engagement in a concrete reality. We began this collective journey with the Food Junctions Festival, and continued with the Foodpaths Movement and ended with *The Food Junctions Cookbook*. Although our journey, as a case study, was neither linear nor without mishap and confusion, inevitably the constraints of this present textual format may render it rather too orderly. Despite its neatness, the case study does not aim to offer a panacea, but rather to resonate with some collected tales of experiential and pedagogical engagement around UCL. It created a catalyst to inspire others and to seek an insight into the relevance of the integrative framework for growing a commons regime in the context of the current landscape of community food initiatives in London.

4.3.1 Food Junctions Festival: igniting a moment

> *Festivals contrasted violently with everyday life, but they were not separate from it. They were like everyday life, but more intense, and moments of that life – in the practical community, food, the relation with nature, in other words, work – were reunited, amplified, magnified in the festival (Lefebvre, cited in Elden, 2004:118).*

Global citizenship and local participation

As an academic-activist, since the beginning of my investigation of the current landscape of food initiatives in London, I have kept an eye on any particular opportunity at UCL that allowed me to experiment with the notion of growing a commons food regime. I went to different events and spoke to a large number of staff and students, subscribed to newsletters from a variety of faculties and organisations and looked for any new source of funding. In November 2009, a brief announcement of a call for proposals on UCL homepage caught my attention:

> *Reveal is a ten day festival taking place from 22 April to 2 May 2010. Produced by CreateKX, the King's Cross creative and cultural development agency, Reveal will animate King's Cross with a dynamic range of cultural events. The programme will distil the essence of the area's unique cultural identity, revealing its rich creative history and celebrating its ambitious future. The themes of the festival are discovery and revelation, opening closed doors and peering into the secret corners of our part of London, and applications should reflect this. The panel will look for applications that cover not only UCL's history but also its present and future.*

Quickly enough I understood that building on the success of the 2007 'Arrivals' programme, Reveal aimed to lay the foundations for 2012, so that King's Cross and St. Pancras could fully realise their position as an Olympic gateway. My instinct told me that this was a rare opportunity to form multiple and reciprocal connections with society, to connect our surrounding local community with the global context that would "cover not only UCL's history but also its present and future". During a walk around

the King's Cross area with its busy roads and junctions, an idea of 'Food Junctions' came to my mind, creating an immediate link between food and King's Cross. In the next few days, the idea of Food Junctions continued to evolve and become clearer.

I started to talk to a number of close friends whom I thought might share an interest in UCL's call for proposals. In less than a week, I had found seven colleagues who felt passionately supportive of my initial proposal and committed to developing it into a real plan. These colleagues included: an American PhD student doing research on urban public spaces, a South African PhD student working on urban design and social innovation, a British PhD student researching participatory spatial design, a Mexican Masters student working on Development Planning, an Austrian second-year economics student, a Malaysian second-year medicine student and a recent British geography graduate.

A number of strategic decisions were made in the initial planning stage. Firstly, we took advantage of food as a broad and inclusive topic that would allow a wide range of involvement across the entire university at all levels (from students to senior member of academic and supporting staff). Secondly, as a reflection of university-community engagement (another kind of 'junction'), we tried to ensure a balanced involvement from both the University and communities around King's Cross and beyond. Thirdly, following the theme of 'revealing' we thought it would be more appropriate that we organised Food Junctions outside the campus.

We conducted a preliminary mapping exercise to identity possible disciplines and community organisations to work with. We realised that talented, creative, motivated people were abundant but they did not necessarily find each other automatically. By taking part in a variety of events and calling or emailing contacts, we found it was relatively easy to get people from both UCL and local communities around King's Cross involved in our project. They were happy to make a contribution and some of them even thanked us for giving them a chance to do something good.

One of the first breakthroughs was the 'discovery' of our key community partner – Camley Street Natural Park (the Park), part of the London Wildlife Trust. The Trust is the only charity dedicated solely to protecting London's wildlife and wild spaces. At the time of our first contact with the Park, it had started to make a transition from focusing on natural conservation towards a broader vision which included sustainable urban food systems as its new development direction. We both recognised the various symbioses including budget, venue, workforce, networks, and knowledge. The manager of the Park expressed a strong desire to extend the existing connections with UCL to develop them into a long-term partnership. Not only were we able to enjoy its multi-functional and flexible spatial design, but the Park also offered us an imaginary space which would encourage further explorations of the interrelationship between nature and built environment and humans and non-humans.

Another instance also had a profound impact on the evolution of Food Junctions. Just before the submission deadline of a complete proposal required for the three short-listed project teams, we received a comment from the programme manager at CreateKX who would sit on the panel of the competition. We were struck by her comment that we should give Food Junctions a more arts-based focus; after all, Reveal was a cultural festival. However, this comment stood in contradiction to the understandings we had drawn from our regular meetings with the coordinator at UCL Public Engagement Unit

who has been supportive of our more broad-based approach. Despite the confusion, the notions that 'everybody is a living artist' and 'aesthetic of bricolage' were applied to broaden the 'frame' of Food Junctions and gave it a more artistic focus.

We eventually won the competition to represent UCL to contribute to the Reveal Festival. However, due to the increasing number of individuals and organisations involved, along with our 'discovery' of the Park and a more artistic framing of Food Junctions, a new idea emerged. Although we were part of the Reveal Festival, our preliminary programme was already rich enough to become an urban food festival in its own right. After a number of discussions with our team members, we came to a consensus to call ourselves 'Food Junctions: a festival where nature meets culture'(6) indicating it was a nested enterprise within the Park and the Reveal Festival but also that many connections (junctions) would be explored, invented, animated and imagined far beyond. This new title also represented well the overall identity of the team of global citizens (only two British; the rest of the team were all of different nationalities) who wanted to make a change in society.

As winter turned into spring, we had just three months to get everything done. Not only were we committed, but we had to move at a rapid pace to make our urban food festival a reality.

Conducting an urban food festival

> *It is to the artistic to which we must turn, not as a rejection of the scientific, but because with both we can achieve binocular vision. Looking through one eye never did provide much depth of field. (Eisner, 1981:9).*

From the outset, we wanted to keep Food Junctions as a genuine collaborative project and the discussion – the dialogue and the interchange of ideas – represented the primary material for the production of the commons. One of the early issues we had to deal with was how to provide a structure that could ensure the quality of the discussion as well as facilitate project management with clear responsibilities such as keeping meeting minutes, updating to-do lists, and keeping track of the deadlines within a team of volunteers.

We decided to hold regular Monday evening meetings in the group study area of the UCL Science Library. Unlike most other public spaces, the library had two particular advantages: first, fostering a sense of belonging and a shared identity; and second, creating an atmosphere of seriousness which helped us to concentrate our mind with discipline and generate positive peer influence.

While we acknowledged the importance of consensus building, it was literally impossible to involve everyone in all our decision-making. Based on our mutual understanding and trust, we divided the project into a number of key tasks such as coordination, programming, marketing, design, budgeting, and organising volunteers. Learning from the notion of 'God/devil is in the details' we tried to break down each key task into bite-size components. We found it was more effective to encourage one another to take up the components that suited us than to impose any top-down or mechanical rules. And interestingly, once we recognised the power of small changes that would contribute to a larger goal, not only did we continue to do things we were originally happy to do, but also we became more willing to go out of our comfort zone to try new tasks.

(6) From now on it is called Food Junctions, Food Junctions Festival, or the Festival in the following pages.

One good example of the effectiveness of this working pattern was programming development. As soon as we had a basic structure for the festival, our 'programme manager' thought of sending a call out to all staff and postgraduates. Again, he took an inclusive approach which would welcome many different ideas. The point was to create a full programme so that all kinds of people would be interested in participating. While for him, sending such a call seemed like common sense, the rest of the team witnessed the power of that 'small action' a week later when our 'programme manager' received more than a hundred replies expressing people's willingness to make a contribution.

Since more than half of the proposals were about giving a short talk, our 'finance manager' suggested we develop thirty-minute presentations and group them together under certain themes. To elaborate his idea, I proposed 'a menu of programmes', with a range of courses (starters, mains, desserts and drinks) in the form of activities such as talks, films, workshops, walks and tours. Five distinct yet interlinked themes were identified: (1) healthy living; (2) politics of food; (3) growing a new piece of the city; (4) identity, memory and heritage; and (5) art, literature, culture, performance and spirituality.

Another example of how we worked together was the space design team. Our design team managed to convince a group of fourth year architecture students and their supervisors to design and fabricate a kiosk – an architectural installation – situated at the front entrance gates of Camley Street Natural Park, to provide a focal point for the Food Junctions. In order to create a more relaxing atmosphere, they invited a small group of friends to make forty soft hessian seats available for sitting in the tent and other venues across the site. Furthermore, to enhance our shared identity as 'collective cooks', the volunteering team contributed to the idea of wearing an apron for both core team members and volunteers at the Festival.

It is important to mention that all our work in progress described here was shared and discussed with all members of staff at the UCL Public Engagement Unit who were funding our project. In so doing, we were able to discover many additional resources which helped to ensure a smooth delivery of the project. It also helped us to conduct an evaluation of the project throughout the process, and above all, to embrace UCL staff as part of our collaborative team, much beyond the normal division of funders and grant recipients. We organised a small launch party and invited all contributing individuals and organisations from both inside and outside the university. Some of the contributors from the communities came to UCL campus for the first time. The launch party was also the first time many of our contributors had met one another, which not only helped to form a Food Junctions community internally but also to spread the message of Food Junctions externally.

The whole team met for the last time the day before the Food Junctions Festival started. We were both excited and anxious. The anxiety was not totally imaginary as we had been through a series of unexpected events in the weeks before the Festival. These events included, for example, the chaos caused by an erupting volcano in Iceland which meant that many contributors would be unable to return to the UK in time due to the closures of airports. At the last minute, a celebrity chef cancelled our agreement as he had got an 'important invitation' to a big show in China. However, we managed to resolve most of the problems creatively and collectively which gave us a sense of security and confidence in facing any obstacles in the future.

Indeed, we were confident Food Junctions was no ordinary festival. Over the course of four and a half days in the ten-day period of the Reveal Festival, we coordinated 60 activities[7], involving over 200 contributors (mostly UCL staff and students and over 30 local community food initiatives) and around 1,500 participants came to the Festival. These activities included providing a free healthy breakfast to start the day, hands-on gardening and cooking sessions, presentations and debates on topics ranging from urban agriculture, food tasting (wine, home-made jam, chocolate, wild honey) art workshops, architectural installations, poetry reading, walks and tours, film screenings and all ending with a dance performance as a kind of harvest celebration. The works presented opportunities for contemplation and discussion, a space for socialising, and having spontaneous conversations about how to cross disciplinary boundaries and develop future collaborative projects for both research and practice.

The Festival was also a continuous engagement with some of the community food initiatives documented in Chapter 3. In addition to inviting them to give a presentation or conduct a workshop, we invited them to provide our catering as part of the harvest celebration. Three community food initiatives were involved. The Calthorpe Project represents and reflects the multicultural and cosmopolitan nature of food in London; Organiclea a localised food systems at a peri-urban area and their worker cooperative business model; and Hare Krishna the relationship between food and faith as well as the role of community groups in caring for the marginalised population in the city. The food was very popular and therefore no leftovers at all. This also turned out to be an effective way for these three initiatives to introduce their work to a new audience.

The real highlight of the Festival was an Indian dance performance. The performance, *Mycorrhizae*, was created as a response to the environment and the theme of the Food Junctions Festival – where nature meets culture. Mycorrhiza is the symbiotic and mutually beneficial relationship formed between fungi and the roots of most species of plant. The fungus gets more constant access to carbohydrates from the plants, and the plant gets an auxiliary system that helps it to absorb water and nutrients. The performance powerfully communicated the idea that food is about nurturing, taking care of, receiving and giving. The message was conveyed by the interaction between dancers, musicians and the audience, creating a dynamic presence and immediacy of the interdependence between us and others.

At the Food Junctions Festival, we were striving to create, extend, and nurture many kinds of connections through a variety of events. We came together to participate, collaborate and learn about food and farming in diverse ways. In so doing, we managed to grow our first commons food regime, which, we truly believed, ignited an important moment to explore the complexity of the food system and our relationships with it in a new light.

A ground-breaking festival

The account given here provided the context to evaluate the outcomes of the first commons food regime we helped to grow. Such an evaluation needed to reconcile the multiple layers of stakeholders involved including the UCL Public Engagement Unit, the Reveal Festival, the Food Junctions team, collaborating individuals and organisations and festival participants and of course my personal reflections. All of these participants had a role in defining the criteria of success of the 'regime', even on its smallest scale, making this a useful example of 'governance through projects' (Marsden, 2000). A

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(7) There were only ten activities proposed in the original funding application.

few ideas here might be helpful in reflecting on the overall feedback from the diverse stakeholders involved at the Food Junctions Festival.

As part of the funding requirement, I was involved in a collaborative evaluation team which included a UCL Public Engagement evaluation officer and a Masters student of Culture Policy who chose Food Junctions as a dissertation case study. The findings from her research demonstrated that with the support of the university to promote knowledge exchange and take on new artistic challenges, a cultural festival like ours could provide innovative and democratic routes into learning by engaging with public audiences in the new knowledge economy (Solley, 2010). The focus of the evaluation was not on food per se, but on the emerging role of higher education to help advance public engagement. The case study has been published on the UCL Public Engagement website[8] and has been widely discussed and shared.

The team at the Camley Street Natural Park expressed their positive experience working with us. They explained that not only had the Food Junctions Festival contributed greatly to the London Wildlife Trust's goal of engaging London's diverse communities and helped to bring a large number of new visitors to the Park, but it had also inspired the team at the Park to use urban public spaces more proactively and creatively. As a result of Food Junctions, they set up new areas for bee-keeping at the Park, built a temporary community garden in a potential development site and coordinated the surplus of crops produced by local community gardens to be distributed to more vulnerable people around King's Cross. The manager of the Park even suggested Food Junctions could become an annual festival.

As expected, there was huge enthusiasm from academic staff at UCL for participating in this Festival. However, what surprised us was their emphasis on how much more they had learned from the Festival than they had contributed. Some were pleased to know more about the work of colleagues who shared similar research interests which might lead to new collaborative projects. Others were impressed by the level of knowledge the audience had and the sophisticated questions they raised which at times challenged their thinking.

As for the core team members, in general, the feedback was mostly positive and all felt that much has been learnt by working together. A unique identity had been formed and shared. As one core team member put it:

> *While it is said that 'too many cook spoil the broth', our case contradicts this, and instead proves that 'many hands make the light work'…Also, I think the University got very good value for money given that our student team put in lots of time, energy, hungry nights, etc…But also that the University showed lots of gratitude for our efforts as well.*

In this regard, the 1-UCL Award[9] might be a good example of a synergistic outcome generated from the Food Junctions. This particular award is designed to foster the notion of UCL as a community and seeks to highlight outstanding achievement by current UCL students in a non-academic field. Nominated by the UCL Public Engagement Unit, the Food Junctions team won the award and the prize of £1000 was donated to Camley Street Natural Park as a way of expressing our gratitude for their

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(8) See http://www.ucl.ac.uk/public-engagement/research/CaseStudies
(9) See http://www.ucl.ac.uk/prospective-students/scholarships/undergraduate/1_UCL

great support. The Award called Food Junctions ‘a ground-breaking festival’, recognising our contributions with the following words:

> *The actions of the team have vastly benefitted UCL and the wider community. In bringing UCL staff and students together with local organisations, the team has opened up UCL’s activities to our neighbours, offering a human face to a university that sometimes presents only buildings. Ownership of Food Junctions was shared with community groups, providing opportunities for local people to advocate for and represent their communities in a wider public context.*

Finally, feedback from the Festival participants was also encouraging and inspiring. One academic participant’s words proved to be summation of our intention behind the project:

> *My expectation was that I was attending a weekend devoted to the subject of urban agriculture. In fact it turned out to be much wider than this. I was especially struck when I arrived on the Saturday morning by the warmth, friendliness and enthusiasm of everyone involved…I loved the combination of intellectual rigour and hands on practical knowledge and teaching. As I am an aspiring anthropologist, the combination of reflexivity and practice is hugely important – doing, thinking and reflecting. Food junctions Festival has certainly helped to open my eyes to the richness of food as an important aspect of human experience.*

Another comment was made by a worker at a community organisation who creatively compared the Food Junctions Festival with *The Gleaners and I*, a film which was shown at the Festival:

> *I felt Food Junctions was like the film The Gleaners and I. It seemed to me that you expanded the definition of the word ‘gleaning’. Nothing was wasted and it shouldn’t be. It’s like a tour guide introducing us to places few maps will identify and wonders you can’t find in the shops. You guys collected all sorts of ignored ingredients, gathering their tastes, colours and details with a kind of improvisational spirit. Like The Gleaners and I, Food Junctions reminded me how to love my neighbour, how to listen, and how to throw away my laziness and my blindness.*

In order to spread the message, both the UCL Public Engagement Unit and Food Junctions team were keen to share our experience more widely. We aimed to create a living exemplar of a learning community: to share learning within the university as well as with members of the public such as community groups, local authorities, interest groups, policy makers, and other academics. At UCL, I spoke at the UCL Public Engagement Symposium and the UK National Public Engagement Symposium, had a Bright Club[10] session on food and sat on funding panel meetings. In addition, since the delivery of the Food Junctions Festival, I have been invited to many communities, universities, city councils, conferences, seminars, and workshops in London and other cities in the UK, to share our experiences and ideas. I have enjoyed many stimulating exchanges with participants of all kinds: community workers, food enterprise leaders, students and teachers, policymakers, campaigners, and ordinary people of every age and background.

However, I was perhaps the most difficult critic of all. By no means did we manage to fulfil all our objectives by addressing the unsustainability of the current food systems,

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(10) See http://www.brightclub.org/

either on a global scale or in London. We cannot naively assume that through our engagement we were able to improve food security and urban food productivity in London and elsewhere, or to change people's mind-set and behaviours immediately. Of course there were many other unresolved practical problems with regard to conducting such an ambitious project.

The big questions were: what was qualitatively special about Food Junctions and how would the world be otherwise if it had never happened? This led me to pose two further questions. Firstly, where did our work differ from the wider agenda, as compared to the current landscape of community food initiatives in London? Secondly, how could we strengthen it, for example, by pushing it onto a more favourable direction in London and also more broadly? While at one level Food Junctions Festival was celebratory, it was not designed only for celebratory action.

A series of co-operative inquiries were conducted and the following list helped me refresh my thinking:

- Spaces allowed and enabled for self-organisation and autonomous control over decisions;
- A deeper understanding of existing power structures that might constrain participation;
- Some of the international contexts were taken into account;
- Research agendas were formulated by innovative participatory methodologies;
- Integration of knowledge production and learning and the link with the University.

With a more critical assessment, I gradually became aware of challenges and opportunities associated with growing another commons food regime. The preliminary conclusion was how to elaborate the true meanings of 'junctions': it was not about what these points were but more importantly, how they interacted.

Following this line of thinking, a direction for ways forward was developed which included: (1) taking advantage of the momentum to extend and prolong ephemerality into continuous university-community engagement; (2) focusing on further mobilising and bridging food knowledge, especially some of the more controversial issues; (3) addressing other aspects of a King's Cross alternative to the one promoted at the Reveal Festival; (4) developing a financially self-sustaining model of engagement after the initial funding stage; and finally (5) exploring the potential to forge a more shared agenda and vision over time.

Once these ideas became clearer, it was only a matter of time before the best of them were translated into concrete actions for growing our next commons food regime.

4.3.2 Foodpaths Movement: transforming a moment into a movement

> *Being simultaneously against, within and after capitalism means that the everyday becomes the terrain where our politics are fought for and worked at…Just as capitalist social relations are reproduced at an everyday level, so too ordinary everyday practices can be generative of anti- and post-capitalisms. Post-capitalism, then, is not an end point, some universal sister–brotherhood of human perfection waiting over the hill. It*

is reconceptualisation such as these that make post-capitalist practice mundane, but also exciting, feasible and powerful (Chatterton and Pickerill, 2010:488).

Sustaining and widening engagement

A week after the Food Junctions Festival ended in May, 2010, I went to visit the Calthorpe Project, a community garden at the heart of King's Cross. As a local resident, I was already a regular volunteer there. As usual, I was the only Taiwanese person taking part in this Friday cooking workshop with a group of senior women from Latin America. Even though there was a language barrier, I learned to do things by watching and imitating. Afterwards, everyone sat down to eat the lunch together around a table. I always enjoyed this Friday ritual. However, in addition to the proximity of this place and my personal interest in cooking, there was another reason I had come here. I had been thinking of creating a joint project with the Calthorpe Project ever since I selected it as one of the case studies during my investigation of the current landscape of community food initiatives in London.

The Calthorpe Project opened in 1984 after local people successfully campaigned against an office development on its 1.2 acre site. It is like a microcosm of London's multiculturalism, accommodating people from different cultures. What impressed me the most was its sustainable food growing space which enjoyed much higher productivity per unit of land than most community gardens I had visited. However, this side of King's Cross where the Calthorpe Project is located seemed to have become a Cinderella area, shunned by the new development site around King's Cross and St. Pancras Station. Under the threat of a big funding cut from the local council, an idea of developing a new community café to increase their financial independence had been discussed for a while yet no real action had yet been taken. Taken together with its relatively complete recycling systems, I thought it would be an appropriate site for experimenting with a localised closed-loop food supply chain and exploring a new business model using the knowledge gained from my earlier investigation into community food enterprises.

There were several reasons why I thought a joint project with the Calthorpe Project might be suitable. The gardening workshop and their home-made catering food had both been very popular at the Festival. We needed to move quickly to take advantage of this positive momentum for a deeper collaboration. Although The Calthorpe Project was one of the first charity organisations that UCL Volunteering Services Unit had built as long-term partnership together, previously the relationship between the two organisations was more one-way, in that UCL students went to the Calthorpe Project to do some volunteering work. My initial idea seemed to fit into the general goal at UCL to sustain and widen two-way engagement with local communities.

More significantly, based on the critical assessment of the Food Junctions Festival, there was a crucial need for introducing and mobilising a variety of food knowledge, especially from those more contradictory and conflicting issues, for developing more sustainable food systems in London. This reflection was enhanced by my attendance at an annual conference at the Royal Geographical Society in 2010. Under the theme of 'food security and food sovereignty', a PhD colleague and I presented the only paper explicitly on the subject of food sovereignty, while the rest of the papers were all on food security. It struck me that certain strands of thinking within the international development of food and agriculture were largely ignored in academia. This also

reminded me of one of the implications identified from the earlier phase of my investigation: the need for building collective knowledge and learning.

We realised that the right combination of team members and key partners was important to the overall success of the Festival. For this next phase of the project, I would need to find a different group of team members and key partners who would be interested in a more radical and political agenda. Another challenge was to find institutional support – both in terms of funding and endorsement – to advance this idea. I understood that this potential project would be rather different from the Festival, but was already convinced of the power of commons-based self-organisation which had led to such a successful Festival.

I was pleased that the Calthorpe Project was very supportive of my initial proposal to develop a joint project. The moment I received the green light, I thought of inviting two PhD colleagues of mine from UCL. One was a Mexican student in my department with whom I presented a paper together on food sovereignty at Royal Geographical Society. Her research was on the promotion of equalitarian spaces for participation by the most vulnerable people for building a more sustainable localised food system in Mexico City. The other one was a British student in the Planning Department researching into 'urban commons' – local collective practices of ownership, management and design of cities. They were both enthusiastic about my idea and made an immediate contribution in urging me to consider inviting community members to become core members of the team.

This was an important step. While at the Food Junctions we worked with many community organisations, almost all of our central decisions were made by the core team members. My two PhD colleagues both insisted that we should be more careful about power-sharing between university and community. I received positive responses from the communities to continue our collaboration. In particular, a community leader who enjoyed the Festival so much that he later called himself an ambassador of the Food Junctions Festival became one of our core team members. With his three-decade experience in community volunteering work it was logical to have him act as a bridge between university and community.

Simultaneously, we had also made some progress from the university side. There was a relatively new funding scheme, UCL Innovation Seed Fund[11], offered from the UCL Public Engagement Unit to UCL staff and students for innovative and inventive projects that connect people outside UCL with our research and teaching. With the success of the Food Junctions, we were encouraged to enter this competition. At the annual UCL Symposium on Public Engagement we were thrilled with the afternoon. Not only had we built some new relationships but had also learned a number of new methods of engagement. We were also grateful to receive two important endorsements from senior members of the university to support our continuous public engagement: one from UCL Vice-Provost (International) and another from the principal facilitator at UCL Grand Challenges.

Unlike the name 'Food Junctions' which we agreed from the outset, it took us longer to agree on a name for this project. Eventually, we decided to call it 'Foodpaths: the King's Cross Movement'[12] to politicise the whole process. Inspired by new social movement theories and particularly the notion of 'everyday activism', we wanted to make the

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(11) See http://www.ucl.ac.uk/public-engagement/funding/innovation
(12) From now on, it is called Foodpaths or Foodpaths Movement in the following pages.

King's Cross movement, a particular kind of urban food movement, more inclusive and accessible at an everyday level through our lived experiences. As Chatterton and Pickerill assert, "Being simultaneously against, within and after capitalism means that the everyday becomes the terrain where our politics are fought for and worked at" (2010: 488). We also wanted to highlight the role of the university in creating platforms to facilitate community participation for knowledge exchange and experience sharing through this urban food movement. Thus, Foodpaths aimed to create paths to do two things: firstly, to support our desire to change current unsustainable food systems especially around the area of King's Cross; and secondly, to encourage university and community to help each other to develop a vision and action plan for long-term and sustainable collaboration rather than only having one-off projects or events.

Once again, we were blessed with the luck to be chosen as one of the six winners of this grant, which enabled us to plant and grow our new seeds of inquiries regardless of all kinds of uncertainties and challenges ahead.

Enacting an urban food movement

> *Eaters...must understand that eating takes place inescapably in the world, that it is inescapably an agricultural act, and that how we eat determines, to a considerable extent, how the world is used. This is a simple way of describing a relationship that is inexpressibly complex. To eat responsibly is to understand and enact, so far as one can, this complex relationship (Wendell, 1992:377).*

We now come to the story of how Foodpaths Movement evolved from an idea into reality. Unlike the Food Junctions Festival, which was part of the Reveal Festival with a fixed ten-day schedule, we deliberately made Foodpaths a six-month project from January to June in 2011 with one event in each month except in April. There were two reasons for this decision. First, this prolonged and continuous engagement would allow us to communicate better the elaborated notion of 'paths' and 'movement'. Second, from the organisational perspective, one event a month not only made it more manageable and less stressful, but such a programme design would also provide more space for learning. If one idea was successful, it could be applied again; if it was not, it could be revised or improved in the next event. Five major themes for each month were decided: (1) growing food in the city; (2) food and cooperatives; (3) food and women; (4) food and health; (5) food and spirituality. Of course these five themes were not definitive, yet as a catalyst project, we thought this selection could already indicate the complexity of food system and our relationships with it.

As part of this innovative experiment, we also wanted to explore ways which would allow events to unfold naturally. We designed a template structure for each event to give the whole project of Foodpaths a kind of coherence. Each event would therefore include a collective cooking section and a roundtable discussion during a shared meal with food prepared at the cooking section. The more we talked, the more we felt that both cooking and eating together as a kind of lived experience would help create a temporary space where a sense of community might emerge, which was believed to stimulate diverse and dynamic dialogues and more spontaneous interactions.

Setting up 'Foodpaths' at the Calthorpe Project it was logical to launch the series of five events with the first theme of 'Growing Food in the City' in January. We invited speakers from both university and community to share their first-hand experiences associated

with growing food in the city. These speakers ranged from a senior lecturer at UCL specialising in the global food crisis and the role of urban agriculture; an allotment holder at Spa Hill Allotment; an environmental worker at the Calthorpe Project; a volunteer at Women's Environmental Networks; an apprentice at Growing Community; and a co-founder of Mapping for Change on participatory food mapping.

The Calthorpe Project as a site and our key venue helped demonstrate the concept of a 'closed-loop' urban food system, from production (community garden), preparation (collective cooking), distribution (serving to our audience), consumption (eating together) and waste management (composting). To raise the issue of food waste, the collective cooking section was led by a member from FoodCycle. We helped cooked a heap of vegetables that would have been thrown away by Sainsbury's had FoodCycle not organised its rescue. While we ate a tasty meal, we listened to our speakers sharing their projects and experiences with us.

The discussion covered a diversity of issues. These included challenges and opportunities about how a city feeds its own population; the long-term prospect of London's food security; possible economic models and livelihood strategies; linkages between urban and rural development; potential lifestyle changes; forms of sustainable agriculture; how to create a critical mass among different food growing initiatives in London and beyond to achieve more influential impacts on food policy and mainstream agricultural practices; and the question of who should take the lead and with what approaches. More questions were asked and discussed than definitive solutions given. However, as a kind of 'movement' we wanted to emphasise that not only knowledge itself but also ways of knowing and learning are profoundly shaped by and in turn shape the societies in which we are embedded. As one of the participants told us, the questions raised at 'Growing Food in the City' had power to fertilise barren soil and lay foundation to grow new crops.

The second event in February was organised with the theme 'Food and Cooperatives' for two particular reasons. First, the United Nations had proclaimed 2012 the International Year of Co-operatives. Second, envisioning a potential community kitchen at the Calthorpe Project, we thought it was important to learn from existing community food enterprises. Invited speakers included a senior lecturer at UCL specialising in cooperative history and movements, especially transnational and comparative social history; a chef from Bonnington Café; a chef and an environmental worker at Organiclea; an officer from Capital Growth; an adviser of food co-ops at Sustain; a community leader at Camden Shares[13]; and one of our core team member who set up Spice Caravan, a catering workers cooperative.

The leader of the cooking section was a chef at Bonnington Café, who had asked everyone to bring a herb or spice and to share what it meant to us. This provided a nice warm-up before we started to cook. Having learnt about collaborative cooking in the previous event, we managed to finish cooking half an hour early. Four hours after collecting leftovers from a warehouse, we sat down to a delicious meal of Jamaican stew, roast parsnips, Nigerian brown beans, yoghurt and coriander, salad and fruit. The overall flow of discussion around the table had been improved by shortening the presentation time given to each speaker. The discussion covered the historic debate about whether co-ops aim to challenge capitalism or to help it function; the implications of scale, social class and ideology of food co-ops; and issues around money and financial sustainability.

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(13) See http://www.timebanking.org/timebanks/camden-shares/

The third event in March, under the theme of 'Food and Women', was quite a different arrangement from the previous two. Foodpaths joined local communities in the London Borough of Camden to organise and then celebrate the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day (IWD). The event took place at the Coram's Fields, another nearby community centre for children and a city farm. We had a cooking section at the Calthope Project on the day before the IWD with a group of Bangladeshi women making traditional Bangladeshi vegetables sourced at a local Bangladeshi food grocery. The food we cooked was served on IWD. We did not invite any speakers as Foodpaths was one of the twenty stalls of other women groups doing other activities (e.g. art workshop, knitting, reflexology, etc.). In order to stimulate conversations with visitors, we decided to present a number of unusual vegetables and fruits.

Although it took considerable time to prepare for this event in advance, many practical things went wrong, including underestimating the difficulties in interacting with other local communities at a joint event like this as each group had to concentrate on their own stalls; no volunteers turning up; and not realising that this event was meant to be a space of relaxation rather than discussion. However, our concerns were quickly washed away by how surprised and amazed our visitors were by the different exotic vegetables we had on our stall, and were keen to know how to cook and grow them. Our vegetables stimulated discussions: while some asked us whether we would grow these Asian vegetables in London others challenged the issue of heated greenhouse energy consumption if we tried to grow them here. There were other more general conversations including the role of women in making family diets healthier and how families struggle to make ends meet with ever-increasing food prices. Above all, this event allowed Foodpaths to meet an even wider audience who had not necessarily been interested in sustainable food issues previously. Some of them were inspired by our presence and two women came to our next event to find out more.

Foodpaths returned to the Calthorpe Project for its fourth event under the theme of 'Food and Health', which could perhaps have been called 'food and oral health'. The session format differed from previous Foodpaths events. This time an informal focus group was facilitated by a professor of the Eastman Dental Institute, which is situated next door to the Calthorpe Project. Although these two organisations are close neighbours, they had hardly had any interactions before Foodpaths. Through Foodpaths, some students and staff at the Institute discovered the Calthorpe Project and have since visited on a regular basis.

The Institute is a leading centre for oral health research, training and specialist care. Both the professor and the Institute generally had a keen interest in involving people in clinical care and research. The professor was particularly intrigued by our invitation to explore the relationship between food and oral health, which are rarely connected in current scholarship.

The cooking section was led by a chef from Hare Krishna who believed that the emotions of the cook, their consciousness, anxiety and fears can enter the food, especially grains. We took advantage of the mild weather to eat outside in the garden, sitting in a semi-circle to aid informality and discussion. Being outside meant competing with more background noise but it had the benefit of being more visible to other garden users and attracting their curiosity.

The relatively smaller group of participants, all of whom participated fully in the subject matter, made it a very inclusive and bonded group. This discussion on oral health was more personal than previous subjects, often referring back to what participants experienced and had been told in childhood and family and bringing in cultural differences. However, there was a substantial discussion about whether government, food companies or individuals bear responsibility for dental wellbeing.

Food is an expression of love, generosity and sharing. As a final event of the series, we decided to give Foodpaths a more holistic embrace with the theme of 'Food and Spirituality'. Since the first Foodpaths event in January, we had looked forwards to a final event outside in the Calthorpe garden on a sunny June day. Come the day, it poured with rain! Undeterred, some volunteer cooks, by now familiar with the kitchen, helped the lead chef from Spice Caravan cook a vegan Eritrean meal. Spice Caravan is a catering co-op in Queens Park which was started by a refugee charity and cooks traditional food from North and East Africa. We were particularly pleased that a number of local residents joined us as some of them were only watching us from a distance at previous events.

We invited speakers from different faith groups but also extended the meanings of spirituality. Discussion covered questions such as what can faith communities do to build a healthier, fairer and more sustainable food system for current and future generations. Speakers included: a project manager of The Faith in Food programme; five faith group members (Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist) sharing the relationships between food and their faith; a senior lecturer at UCL Geography on her research on migration and religion in Vancouver[14]; and a live food consultant on raw food diet as a spiritual practice which reminded us of the mysteries and miracles of nature and plants. Throughout the event we admired the intricate carved watermelons on display. To make it a more festive atmosphere, we enjoyed a live performance of harp music from Columbia, and a South Indian dance. A participant's comment echoed Wendell's notion of 'eating as an agricultural act'. He said:

> *Understanding the relationship between food and spirituality is like developing a communal attitude, learning to see the subtle connections between a farmer and consumer and between near and far and between people and animals…We must learn what kind of food system can allow us to develop such a communal attitude and our connection with the world.*

Although we might not change the whole capitalist system immediately, we endeavour to practise the values we truly believe in whenever and wherever possible. As Chatterton and Pickerill state, "ordinary everyday practices can be generative of anti- and post-capitalisms" (2012:488). At Foodpaths Movements, we elaborated the notion of an 'urban food movement' as 'everyday activism' through ordinary practices such as gardening, cooking, sharing a meal around a table. And yet, Foodpaths Movement was not a fully signposted journey to a utopia, but paths that we all had to seek and find, like any other adventurous journeys full of mud and swamps as well as uncertainties and insecurity, but at the same time excitement and fun. Above all, it was not merely about any individuals but us together, creating new paths towards a more sustainable food system in London. Through sustaining, widening and deepening the engagement between university and community, we managed to grow our second commons food

(14) In Vancouver there is a fascinating example of urban planning. All places of worship are located together along one road (known locally as highway to heaven) which has many large Churches, Mosques and Temples. It is a requirement that two thirds of each plot is farmed in order to retain agricultural use and limit urban sprawl. Usage includes community orchards and community gardens. The Buddhist temples make best use of the land for food growing.

regime, which was transforming the important moment ignited at the Food Junctions Festival into a powerful movement enacted and practised at an everyday level with the full pleasures of growing, cooking, eating, talking and thinking about food.

It's hard to assess the impacts of the movement

From the beginning of the Foodpaths Movement, we set up a systematic evaluation mechanism such as meeting minutes, note-taking, video-recording and writing-up short reports, which helped capture what was happening at the event and could be accessed via our blog. After each even, we managed to incorporate some of the feedback into the next event. In particular, I kept close contact with some of our multi-stakeholders and conducted a number of co-inquiries to explore certain issues where we had shared interests.

In order for our learning to be effective, we needed to be critical and realistic about our evaluation. A list of things that did not work out can be long. One of the most obvious unfulfilled goals was the fact that we failed to develop a new business model for the Calthorpe community café by learning from many existing practices of community food enterprises in London. Many other problems emerged during the project and while we were able to tackle some of them others remained unresolved. These problems included programme design, for example, a mapping local food exercise was more challenging than expected in part due to our limited knowledge and skill in this particular field and in part due to our unclear objectives. Another problem was marketing, branding and outreach. Not only was it time consuming but also we failed to take advantage of the full potential of our blog and social media. We were not achieving our original goal in terms of engaging a more marginalised population and realised that a deeper structural barrier (e.g. basic material security) made inclusive community participation much more difficult. Similarly, we lacked representation from mainstream food corporations. And, it was hardly surprising that sustaining and widening engagement still depended on the committed work of the core team members rather than making it more institutionalised.

With this caution in mind, in drawing together some concluding threads, I return to our initial two aims. Our first aim was to facilitate sustainable university-community engagement in King's Cross area. Based on our embedded evaluation throughout the entire process of Foodpaths Movement, we believed Foodpaths succeeded in bringing together an eclectic mix of people interested in food in a way that did not exist elsewhere. From formal and informal feedback this was the aspect of Foodpaths most appreciated by participants. From the evaluation forms provided at each session, benefits for members of the University include: informing grounded research questions; gaining practical experiences; and dialectical development between theories and practices and civic participation. As the coordinator at the Calthorpe Project commented:

> *It's good to work with the students from UCL as they have such new and innovative ideas. As a community centre manager, it's easy to get bogged down in the day to day running of the centre making inspiration hard to come by. Foodpaths has brought many new visitors to our garden with interesting ideas and experiences that we can learn from.*

Our second aim was to develop constructive paths, including shared visions and effective methods, towards sustainable food systems in London through the creation of spaces for dialogue among multi-stakeholders. We were interested in the role of

Foodpaths, however modest or small it might be, in the development and promotion of sustainable urban food systems in London. We tried to facilitate learning, share knowledge and information, and encourage collaboration and dialogue around goals, means and expected outcomes. We also experimented in innovative ways to build an adaptive capacity at different levels from individuals, to core team members and also organisations.

The research from which Foodpaths sprung suggested there were many food initiatives in London but that they tended to operate independently and did not maximise their political and social impact. There was evidence from the feedback that Foodpaths was succeeding in joining more projects together and was helping participants link various themes (co-ops, growing, food waste, the role of women). It also succeeded in bringing together different sectors including policy-makers and some statutory bodies. What remained to be seen was whether Foodpaths had an impact on empowering those community food initiatives to increase their ambition and self-confidence. Will they see themselves as part of a wider movement in a more political light compared to growing food only as an enjoyable personal leisure pursuit? The following quotations might illustrate this point:

> *It's hard to assess the impacts of the movements…Foodpaths may promote some radical thinking in a gentle way that helped the issues become more accessible to more people, but at the same time it was actually more radical than appeared (a core team member).*
>
> *It did make me think and it will stimulate debate within the community I live in with regard to collective food buying and supporting local food enterprises (a participant at 'Food and Cooperative').*
>
> *I think the way in which the 'rights' and the 'movement' were interpreted was very inspiring. I start to reflect the right is not only about property right or legal framework but also rights to control over our lives (a community group leader, a participant at 'Growing Food in the City').*
>
> *The city plays an important role in making food issues go from being invisible to become more visible. We need to facilitate coordinated efforts and develop a more progressive food strategy and food policy. It must be holistic and set the priorities right…This reminds me of Gandhi's concept of 'swaraj', an idea to regenerate new reference points, systems, and structures that enable individual and collective self-development…Foodpaths, in my eyes, has taken on this challenge courageously (a speaker at 'Growing Food in the City').*

Thankfully, through Foodpaths Movement, we have met many like-minded people who are focused on the many problems associated with food and farming who are sincerely interested in tackling them with passion, creativity and energy. Foodpaths had not only helped continue to maintain and nurture networks built from the Food Junctions Festival but also helped develop numerous new networks and relationships in London and beyond. However, all these networks were still quite personal and time and place-bound. More thinking emerged. How could we create a legacy at UCL with recognition and legitimacy that would inspire more students and staff to continue our journey or even challenge us with much better ideas and effective organisations? How could we have our stories heard by a much wider audience? How can we connect ourselves

with those who are already conscious or become conscious about the pressing issues surrounding food and farming in their own localities as well as around the world to encourage and learn from one another to be stronger and more organised?

A few weeks after the last event of 'Food and Spirituality', another academic-activist friend at UCL gave me a handwritten card with the title 'Ingredients to change the world', with a translation of the German writer Bertolt Brecht's words:

> *It takes a lot of things to change the world:*
> *Anger and tenacity. Science and indignation,*
> *The quick initiative, the long reflection,*
> *The cold patience and the infinite perseverance,*
> *The understanding of the particular case and the understanding of the ensemble:*
> *Only the lessons of reality can teach us to transform reality.*

Interestingly enough, she used the word 'ingredients' to change the world. Since the beginning of the Food Junctions Festival, there has always been an idea of producing a cookbook as an outcome of a communal journey, although we were not clear about how it would look and how we could make it happen. As time went by an image of a cookbook had become more vivid.

In effect, we had begun quietly to grow our third commons food regime during the process of our second one. This third commons food regime, in the form of a cookbook, we hoped would celebrate moments and movements accumulated from our collective endeavours at the Food Junctions Festival and the Foodpaths Movement, as a way to develop a common vision and to continue to connect our journey with many others around the world.

4.3.3 The Food Junctions Cookbook: celebrating moments and movements

> *Cookbooks are the history of an epoch. They show how people prepared and ate the ingredients available to them. Cookbooks provide answers to social, political, and economic questions about the society for which they were written. They are an essential ingredient to preserving our past and enhancing our future (Julia Child).*[15]

Continuity and variations

Ever since we started to organise the Food Junctions Festival, an idea of producing a cookbook had always been with us. Throughout the Festival and the Foodpaths Movement, we had generated a huge amount of materials. The more I tried to consolidate and analyse these materials the more I felt the need to combine them into a more coherent form and share them with a wider audience. Some of the contributors to the Festival remembered our initial idea of a cookbook and asked us if any progress had been made on it. We even received positive support from a number of famous food writers as well as UCL academics, including the Vice-Provost of UCL and other senior members of staff. I realised that it was time to revisit the idea of the cookbook.

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(15) Cited from the website of 'On the Table' available at http://justserved.onthetable.us/2011_04_01_archive.html [accessed on 30 September 2012]

We formed the smallest team – two of us as co-editors. Two strategic decisions were quickly made. Our cookbook would be published online as a free PDF-download as well as in physical form. This unique cookbook would represent the continuity and variations of our collective journey – a process of engagement to create something dynamic, innovative and sustainable over time. Fortunately, a few months later, we received some good news. Not only was our application for a grant successful, we had also built an intensive network of collaboration, including professional editors, proof-readers, designer, publisher, copyright consultant, photographer, food critics and reviewers, just to name a few. However, among all these important collaborators, the full support and mentorship from Dr. Kaori O'Connor, a senior research fellow at UCL Anthropology Department, was of particular significance. Besides being an academic, she is also a food historian, a writer and an editor of cookbooks. Her professional experiences provided us with a sense of security for this huge undertaking. But more importantly, her genuine interest in our work and trust in our capabilities gave us considerable confidence.

Publishing a radically different cookbook

> *When we speak of a centre we shall mean mostly the centre of a field of forces, a focus from which forces issue and toward which forces converge (Arnheim, 1984:2).*

After an initial period of preparation, we sent out a call for contributions across a diverse range of networks. In the call, we detailed the objectives of the cookbook and provided some instructions on the types of submissions we were collecting, not to constrain potential contribution's creativity but to serve as a point of reference. Furthermore, a sample article written by our mentor, Dr. O'Connor, was also offered. We emphasised that contributions did not have to be simple in ideas but must be understandable in language. We made simple rules but kept a level of flexibility (for example, extending deadlines and word limit). We aimed to empower all the contributors to see this cookbook as their own initiative and then become more self-organised with all the necessary support from us.

Most of our contributors had some previous involvement, whether as organisers, speakers, partners, volunteers, or participants. Half of our contributors were from the university, mainly from UCL but with a small numbers from other universities. The other half of the contributors were from the community, both groups and individuals. We welcomed people from all walks of life. Many meetings, conversations and email communications took place between editors, proof-readers and our contributors as well as physical journeys, mostly on foot, between the university campus and numerous community centres in London. In order to keep an egalitarian principle, the articles were listed by their titles alphabetically.

In the *Cookbook*, some 70 contributors share their 'living recipes' for things to cook, things to think about and above all things to do. The book mixes practice, politics and pleasure and ties people together through a common interest in food. With elaborated notion of 'recipe' both literally and metaphorically, the book combines insights and inspirational stories from all round the world: how to taste wine, open up a catering co-op, deal with food waste, prevent childhood obesity, make delicious dishes from wild plants and grow food in the city. We were pleased that all these stories and recipes and memories of producing them are now stored in this *Cookbook*.

We organised a launch party for *The Food Junctions Cookbook* on the main campus of UCL, where the idea of the Food Junctions was first conceived. UCL, for us, was like what Arnheim describes, "the centre of a field of forces", a focus from which forces issue and toward which forces converge" (1982:2). While previously we hosted our project off-campus, we thought it was crucial to show that university campus can act as a hub and bring people together, 'towards which forces converge'. Vice-Provost (International) gave the opening remarks, followed by six contributors' short talks, an Indian dance performance, and a poetry reading, with a harp musician playing throughout the party. Three recipes from the *Cookbook* were prepared by two community groups – Spice Caravan and the Calthorpe Project.

It was a well-attended and energetic event. Many representatives of the London food scene were there including academics, cooks, activists and members of community projects. Contributors brought along their family members and friends to join this party. This was a sort of harvest celebration, celebrating the moments and movements from our collective endeavours at the Food Junctions Festival and the Foodpaths Movement, as a way to develop a common vision and to continue to connect our journey with many others around the world. In the end, some participants started to dance to the harp's music adding another layer of warmth to the party. The feedback from the participants at the party was positive and included these two quotations:

> *The short talks from different contributors were fascinating and remind me of why this subject of food, environment, ecology, culture and community is endlessly inspiring and an affirmation of a lifetime's work. I felt immensely proud to have been a contributor amongst such luminous company (a community contributor to the Cookbook).*

> *I find it hard to categorise this book. It's so spiritual, but it is also extremely political as well…and again, you have light-hearted stuff but you also talk about serious science…This is one of the most radical books you can get (a community worker and a participant at the book launch party).*

Coincidentally, the day after the book launch party a press release was announced at UCL News online, which also highlighted our approach as being 'radical'.

> *In line with UCL's tradition of being a radically different university, The Food Junctions Cookbook is radical in its approach to knowledge creation…It reflects a new model of innovation that involves communities collaborating and building on one another's efforts rather than enclosing knowledge. This model encourages diversity and creativity through openness and inclusivity, offering a good example that innovation can come from many different walks of life and people.*

The book is licensed under the Creative Commons and a PDF version can be downloaded for free at www.food-junctions.org.uk. But just like food itself, a 'real' book is an object that speaks to all the five senses and hard copies can be bought on Amazon. However, since our cookbooks were not meant to make any profit, we decided to donate our cookbooks to local libraries and community centres, offered free copies of the cookbooks to some community groups, and participated in a number of book clubs. However, we did suggest not giving these cookbooks for free because we observed that many people tend to devalue a free gift. Surprisingly, a variety of creative usages of the cookbooks were developed, including selling them at a community green fair or at a

local café or marketing them as a bonus for new members signing up. We were excited by the news that one cookbook had been sold for £100 at a community Christmas fund-raising event.

Since the publication of the *Cookbook*, hundreds of people have told me that they were encouraged and strengthened by knowing that other people were doing similar things and that change was not only possible but under way. Many of them recognised the power of food and the meaning of the commons, even though they might have different interpretations of and approaches to food or the commons.

If we agree with Child's assertion that "Cookbooks are the history of an epoch", then even though we are not able to "provide answers to social, political, and economic questions about the society for which they were written", we would like to think that *The Food Junctions Cookbook* serves as "an essential ingredient to preserving our past and enhancing our future". In celebrating both moments and movements with food in life, we managed to grow our third commons food regime. While we expressed, in our acknowledgements, our gratitude to all of those involved in our journey whose experiences and stories had helped develop the *Cookbook*, we dedicated the *Cookbook* to everyone who cares about food. We thanked everyone for keeping the water flowing, the food growing, the kitchen cooking, and our journey together continuing, and ultimately leading the world to enter a new epoch of history.

Cookbooks are the history of an epoch

It may sound like an exaggeration to say we are 'entering a new epoch of history'. However, there are many signs that this is happening. I will describe just a handful of these signs in the next few paragraphs by sharing some of the reflections and comments we received. To begin with, one comment was made by our mentor, Dr. O'Connor, who saw our *Cookbook* as a social text revealing the new democratisation and cosmopolitanism of cookery.

> *In the old day, cookery books were written by 'professionals' and were also written within very definite genres – either to do with the kind of food (baking, soup) or the nationality (German, British, French). The recipes were cut off from their personal associations, and very often their origins – certainly cut off from their environmental and political implications, from the growing to the disposal. Your book used food to make new meanings and is (a) not written by professional cooks; (b) has all the personal associations; (c) is very cosmopolitan and (d) has all the eco-political content. Also, although it is in book form, it very much has the ethos of the internet, the new communication, not tied down by materiality. And it breaks through all the old monopolies – of 'professional' gatekeepers who decide what should be cooked, and how, and how it should be presented. Above all, your book gave food back its meaning, in so many ways.*

Another reflection was provided by an evaluation officer at UCL Public Engagement Unit (the Unit), with whom we have learnt a great deal of effective public engagement and what it all means. Three learning points from the Unit are encouraging.

> *First, you set up a broad and inclusive topic which allowed a wide range of involvement across the entire university at all levels. The Unit has taken this approach to encourage other projects to consider a broad interest to open up the scope of engagement. Second,*

it is important to continue involvement to maintain and nurture personal relationships and networks. You started with the Food Junctions Festival, continued with Foodpaths Movement and the Cookbook gave it a nice ending and created a legacy, a record of what you had been doing. You gained recognition and legitimacy at UCL. Your journey also represented a living example of co-evolution within a bigger organisation. The Unit is a pilot programme funded by the Beacon and is committed to supporting any experiments and innovation to create a learning community. You demonstrated that a small project can actually continue to grow into something quite complex and diverse. Third, we have little opportunities to really talk to people living here and really invest time and energy to build trust and relationships and understand their needs and aspirations. Your food projects helped us focus our mind on our own neighbourhood with a wider understanding of the global issues as well.

The third example was from the principal facilitator at UCL Grand Challenges whose endorsement could not be more valuable. He thought *The Food Junctions Cookbook* was particularly important in two notable ways.

1. It has the potential to impact local and national government for a more progressive framework for food policy and regulation with a vision to affect positively the lives, health and wellbeing of the working class, marginalised and most vulnerable.

2. It provides a new paradigm for community-oriented social innovation – beyond food security and food sovereignty, addressing sustainable resource management (water, air quality, housing, health, work and education) – where the autonomies, the rights, and the responsibilities of urban dwellers could also benefit from similarly imaginative activity. This will help UCL to make a distinctive contribution not only to the global debate on the challenge of feeding an increasingly populous world in the cities but more widely on the challenge of developing sustainable cities as a whole.

Similar developments were occurring in the wider UCL academic community. The concept of 'the commons' has recently gained momentum, with commons-based research identified as a radically innovative research methodology. However, the elusiveness of the concept means that it is still unclear what commons-based research might look like and how it might be conducted. Taking the *Cookbook* as a case study, a joint research project between geography and history departments was undertaken to understand commons-based research in theory and in practice with two broad aims. First, to explore questions such as how, what and why people contribute in various circumstances and what are the perceived or encountered barriers to involvement and what are their aspirations for future collaboration. Second, to develop a set of values and principles for a commons-based research methodology based on the insights gained from producing the *Cookbook*.

A number of efforts to create practical applications to continue our engagement and collaboration with communities have been in development. An increasing number of community members and organisations have started to see UCL as part of the community, and become more willing and confident to explore possibilities of working with UCL. People from both inside and outside UCL have told us that they have gradually understood the value of collective learning and co-production of knowledge.

Since the dialogues began, a wealth of opinions and creativity has been revealed. By documenting our journey of engagement and collaboration between university and community, the *Cookbook* has planted seeds in many different directions. Many people would like to see a deeper exploration of urban food pathways in London and elsewhere with an interdisciplinary approach that embraces imaginative multi-cultural conviviality and vitality. They would like to see this model used more widely as a discursive and inspiring forum for community and academic debate. However, within the current educational structure, the links between a research-led institution and community engagement are still weak and our work has highlighted the 'gaps' for such engagement. Thus, there has been a call for a new pedagogy and a more progressive knowledge governance system.

Finally, I would like to share an even more personal comment from an experienced community leader who I first met at an annual event organised by the Women's Environmental Network. Since then she has become my mentor and a source of my strength and inspiration as an academic-activist, but more fundamentally, as the sort of person I want to become. One of the two most precious lessons she has taught me was that 'kindness is more important than righteousness' and the value of 'reconciliation'.

> *For some time, there has been a kind of anxiety among many strands of movements and the debates are so bitter, they sometimes become hateful of one another. There are certain eras in history which are too complex, too deafened by contradictions and conflicts to allow us to see any sign of hope. But in your case, it seemed to me a hopeful sign by saying 'it's our world, and we dare to hope that perhaps we are finally able to remake it'. But you are doing it with a kind of tenderness and care. You are creating a catalyst to unleash a sense of confidence and ambition underpinned with action to demonstrate serious intent…I think you are more leftist and of course a feminist, but you are not totalising any particular ideology; what you have tried is to bring together different individuals and organisation into alliances, a network of actors who might or might not share something in common. But the point is to embrace them all and provide spaces for them to interact. You encourage people to share their own experiences and through this, they might start to see a broader picture associated with their experiences and once they see and recognise this picture, they might grow up and become motivated to take bigger challenges. The good thing about your approach is that all these changes are not pressurised by you or by anybody. It's all self-organised with a new consciousness. This is what The Food Junctions Cookbook and the collective journey thus far can teach us today.*

I was especially pleased to have this mentor's encouragement but I was aware that if anything had been achieved, our journey was just starting. As written in the Epilogue, the *Cookbook* does not mark the end of our journey but rather an open invitation to anyone who cares about food to join us.

Postscript

Since *The Food Junctions Cookbook* was published at UCL, much has happened. We have been gratified by the response our collective journey has received. What we have learned is the fact that under the surface of differences, we all have common hopes and dreams and what it means to work hard on a common goal. Once again, I like to believe that we are in a stronger position to fulfil what was stated in our original bid for the funding of the Food Junctions Festival, in which we said that "we want to tell

our stories, as students within particular departments and across the UCL community; as local residents around King's Cross and as global citizens". In order to continue our journey, I would like to gain deeper insights into growing a commons food regime in the next section.

4.4 Learning from the UCL case study

What can the UCL case study tell us about the notion of growing a commons food regime? The purpose of this section is to gain a deeper and broader understanding of growing a commons food regime by learning from the UCL case study at two levels: firstly, an emergent 'model' from the case study will be presented, and secondly, based on this model, implications for growing a commons food regime through a community food initiative in London will be identified.

4.4.1 An emergent 'model' from the case study

As described in the previous section, although the three regimes were grown one after another, changes never appeared in a linear manner. However, I embrace the idea that a realistic understanding can be reached by using an innovative mix of factual evidence and affective experiences, drawn from my own reflections as well as from those involved in this practice and research. While there were clear differences in the specifics of stakeholders, in their activities and the outcomes from these, by applying the integrative framework as 'a tool of insight' within the UCL case study, three emergent themes have been identified in each one of its three distinct, yet interlinked stages, namely, strategic planning, commoning dynamics and commoning outcomes and evaluation (See Table 4.2). This in turn provided the base to reveal a model that has emerged from the case study.

Stages of growing a commons food regime with the UCL case study		
1. Strategic planning	2. Commoning dynamics	3. Commoning outcomes and evaluation
• Global citizenship and local participation • Sustaining and widening engagement • Continuity and variations	• Conducting an urban food festival • Enacting an urban food movement • Publishing a radically different cookbook	• A ground-breaking festival • It's hard to assess the impacts of the movement • Cookbooks are the history of an epoch
Emergent themes		
• Exercising institutional entrepreneurship • Forming core groups and key partners • Articulating inclusive framing and communication	• Mapping spaces and places for commoning • Embracing embedded learning routes and mobilising diverse food knowledge • Expanding the meanings and practices of the commons	• Balancing multi-evaluation mechanisms • Facilitating multi-loop and multi-level learning (for both food knowledge and commoning) • Ensuring the continuity and quality of growing

Table 4.2 Emergent themes at each stage of growing a commons food regime in practice at UCL

Firstly, three key themes are identified in the stages of strategic planning, including exercising institutional entrepreneurship, forming core groups and key partners, and articulating inclusive framing and communication. Unlike the concept of leadership and entrepreneurship broadly recognised in the literature, exercising institutional entrepreneurship refers to the 'embedded agency' and "activities of actors who have an interest in particular institutional arrangement and who leverage resources to create

new institutions or to transform existing ones" (Maguire et al., 2004:657). UCL as an established institution has certain rules, norms and beliefs. On the one hand, for navigating change, what we attempted from the outset was to capture any kind of window of opportunity, explore and elaborate resources and capacity, arising from the institution in which we are located. On the other hand, the existence of a policy framework that legitimised our actions at higher levels of decision making also helped cross-scale management. Therefore, exercising institutional entrepreneurship emphasises how we organised ourselves to resolve tensions and challenges related to this embedded agency with continuity and variations.

The next crucial theme was to form core groups and key partners with the 'right' combination. In part this would be based on previous social networks, people and organisations we had already known, but also on a certain kind of risk-taking in working with newcomers, who should at least have a basic level of shared values, mutual trust and respect, commitment and capacity. Within this self-organising process, we were willing to explore and experiment with different ways of working together and took responsibility for the decisions and actions we carried out on behalf of the initiatives involved.

Articulating inclusive framing and communication took place when we decided the titles of the initiatives in order to make them more relevant, useful and responsive, not only for all stakeholders' needs, but also for achieving the wider scope of participation, and opening up people's imagination. Furthermore, we employed a kind of care-based communication, meaning that we aimed to be the best ambassadors of our values and beliefs by being ourselves, communicating with people with an open mind and above all, being active in listening to and appreciating others whenever possible.

Secondly, instead of a linear sequence, three interacting elements were particularly important and constituted the stages of commoning dynamics: mapping places and spaces for commoning, embracing embedded learning routes and mobilising diverse food knowledge, and expanding the meanings and practices of the commons. Learning, as I did from the investigation of the current landscape of community food initiatives in London, I found out that the term commons was not familiar to most of the study participants I spoke to, even though they found the term relevant to what they were doing on the ground. On the contrary, the power of food was well expressed and demonstrated in a variety of ways. Therefore, taking these two distinct attributes together, we endeavoured to expand the meanings and practices of the commons by mapping places and spaces for commoning and embracing embedded learning routes and mobilising diverse food knowledge. More specifically, mapping places and spaces were aimed to optimise the possibilities of change through designing new institutions, rules of games and patterns of behaviour, even though it was mostly informally. We also paid special attention to networks of actors and actants and tried to engage with food agencies innovatively. In turn, we have discovered, claimed, created and connected places and spaces, local and global, natural and cultural, physical and virtual, at different levels, scales, and contexts, with a focus on a variety of power relations among stakeholders involved.

Inspired by the food sovereignty movement, embracing embodied learning routes and mobilising diverse food knowledge was meant to create epistemic communities, where knowledge is shared and generated, not only focusing on knowledge itself but also the process of identifying and establishing it. Our commitment to having genuine

collaboration between the university and communities was a clear example. We preferred to 'preach' the notion of a commons food regime through our actions – by actually growing it together. The basic assumption was that once people experienced the growing process, they would start to see the world through the lens of the commons, and to a large extent they would naturally apply that perspective to their everyday lives and in some cases, they might even begin to rethink what might constitute the elements of a new kind of society. In so doing, we have extended the varieties of the commons from not only focusing on common-pool resources but also looking at public goods (e.g. public spaces, public services, knowledge, cultural/natural heritage), club and toll goods (e.g. redistributing benefits of membership), and even private goods (e.g. seeds, crops, cooked food and recipes, facilities, tools, private properties). We also helped people to realise that growing a commons food regime can have multifaceted dimensions – a refreshing discourse and language, a philosophy of political economy, an experiential, practical and even spiritual way of being, or a set of values, attitudes and a worldview.

Finally, the last stage of growing a commons food regime was commoning outcomes and evaluation, which also consisted of three key themes: balancing multi-evaluation mechanisms, facilitating multi-loop and multi-level learning (for both food knowledge and commoning), and ensuring the continuity and quality of growing. While it is important, for all stakeholders to agree upon a set of clear parameters for growing a commons food regime, in practice we sometimes had to alter the process of growing a commons food regime to accept different outputs and outcomes from the original aims and objectives. This was due to the occasional uncertainties, conflicts and contradictions associated with collective action in a complex world. Acknowledging that conflicting differences between stakeholders were not negatives to be eliminated but diverse values to be recognised was helpful in developing a balanced view in terms of evaluation. For example, our funders recognised that we were breaking new ground, so they were more flexible with the terms and conditions of their funding.

One of the key factors that allowed us to continue the journey was a more inclusive and long-term perspectives from those involved, either funders or study participants, in the sense that no-one was blamed for changing trajectories and failed goals. What really mattered to us was that we had multiple monitoring and evaluation mechanisms (e.g. evaluation from UCL Public Engagement Unit, from partnering community organisation, core team internal evaluation and my own reflections) that would help us assess whether people involved had gained an adaptive capacity to learn and to organise themselves to make our food systems more sustainable.

This led to the second theme: facilitating multi-loop and multi-level learning (for both food knowledge and commoning). We understood the importance of a learning culture and a learning organisation which allowed the freedom to experiment and innovate without concern about making mistakes. Therefore, rather than keeping our learning and knowledge restricted to a handful of individuals and groups, we adopted a large number of methods (see section 4.2) to facilitate multi-level (e.g. individuals, action groups, organisations, and networks) and multi-loop learning (single-loop, double-loop and triple-loop; see Table 2.5) for the complexity of food knowledge and actual process of practice. To this end there has been a variety of learning reports and reflective accounts produced by our projects, together with conferences, seminars and workshops. We were also continuously building and nurturing networks of communication, bridging organisations on the edge, creating mutual trust and mutual support and above all, through everyday practices such as growing, cooking and sharing, we provided

the conditions for learning and exchanging knowledge about growing a commons food regime.

Lastly, we come to the third theme of this stage, which refers to ensuring the continuity and quality of growing, including being aware of historicity, reflection, forward thinking and co-evolution, all of which was underlined by the concept of time. Despite the non-linearity of the three commons food regimes, it was a journey which had a clear beginning, middle and the end, although the end later became another beginning (i.e. the journey ending is the journey beginning). It was a series of critical decisions that we made from several possible alternatives that determined a particular development of our journey. Although we are a product of a particular time in history, in our case study, we were able to step back and reflect on what we were doing and consider alternative routes forward. In this sense, all people involved in the case study were revealed to co-evolve with a wider system. To a large extent, growing a commons food regime is like creating virtuous circles whenever and wherever possible.

The examination of the processes by which stakeholders became engaged in the case study revealed an emergent model of enabling, facilitation, coordination and communication. Informed by the case study, we realised that each commons food regime, like all human organisations, contains both designed and emergent structures in the evolutionary process, which echo the statement that human beings are both the product and the designer of the system they live in. This human-oriented perspective argues for a different approach to managing organisations with the notion of enabling conditions and infrastructures (Mitleton-Kelly, 2003). These enabling conditions and infrastructures may also include political, social, cultural, psychological and technical aspects which are needed at a variety of levels and scales, and over a long period of time.

Thus, in addition to holding a vision of a new way of life, one of the most significant challenges for growing a commons food regime was how to bring together 'appropriate' enabling conditions and infrastructures that can allow us to establish "deliberate processes which encourage reflection and observation", encourage "opportunities for communication and persuasion among social actors" (Armitage, 2008:25) and reclaim the self-organisation adaptive capacities of citizens and communities to experiment and innovate, and through this, offer alternatives to shape the very essence of life.

From this specific note, we now move to a discussion of implications of this emergent model from the case study for growing a commons food regime through a community food initiative in London.

4.4.2 Implications for growing a commons food regime through a community food initiative in London

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the case study presented here can be seen as a response to the investigation of the current landscape of community food initiatives in London. There are three major points which emerge from the UCL case study which, though particularly relevant to London, may also be applicable more broadly.

First of all, it is important to emphasise the importance of enhancing the university-community engagement in fostering innovative knowledge governance systems. The case study has clearly demonstrated the diversity of knowledge learned and applied

from both the integrative framework as 'a tool of insight', and the implications of the investigation of the current landscape of community food initiatives in London. Through the university-community engagement, we endeavoured to challenge the predominant approach to knowledge which has been based on a hierarchical, bureaucratic, individualistic and/or corporate-driven governance system. Rather, we promoted a more horizontal and interactive knowledge governance system where a multiplicity and interdisciplinarity of knowledge as well as a variety of channels for learning were created and sustained. We encouraged people to learn from one another about our intricate relationships with food and farming, power relations within London and global food systems. We also facilitated the process that would help people involved to build more personal connections with nature and culture, give them new insights about broader meaning in their lives and make them begin to understand the value of a new model of collaborative innovation that advances diversity and creativity through openness and inclusivity.

Furthermore, developing embedded, flexible and inclusive evaluation mechanisms, with a higher priority given to the evolving process of growing a commons food regime and its transformative impacts, all this should be integral to an innovative knowledge governance system. Our experience has demonstrated that participatory action research might be particularly relevant in this instance as it gives credence to the dialectic between theory and practice. There is a need to consider who should be involved (i.e. the evaluation team) and how to work through this co-inquiry in order to evaluate the success and failures of, and learn from, any activity or project undertaken throughout the 'embedded' process: planning, coordination, implementation, documentation and dissemination. Since we have shown that growing a commons food regime is similar to a complex living system where uncertainties are inevitable, rather than keeping a rigid evaluation approach focusing only on matching objectives and outcomes, it is also important to maintain a degree of flexibility for evolution and adaptation in response to unanticipated and changing circumstances. While the criteria of evaluation should follow a bottom-up approach among the evaluation team, the overall assessment should go beyond the judgement on the basis of the narrow criteria of positivist social and natural sciences alone and emphasising more transformative outcomes through the process of engagement. In short, we assumed that the development of knowledge is fundamental to the possibilities of genuine food democracy, food justice and food citizenship.

While the UCL case study was led by the university to serve as an active intermediary for effective multiple modes of knowledge exchange (May et al., 2009) and cross-fertilisation between various actors and branches of activities, it is equally important that community food initiatives become more open to the university. This is genuine mutual communication and coordination at different scales. The case study calls for more directly participative and power-sharing forms of knowledge governance systems which require greater dialogues among community sectors as well as public and private sectors – based on a more elaborated definition of community food initiatives, and with an understanding of the notion of 'sustainable communities' at heart.

The second implication refers to a need to broaden the scope of food governance and common resource governance by interacting with the state and the market creatively. From the case study, we have seen that food touches us in many ways and has shaped our political, cultural, economic, and social landscape. Through food we can better understand and act to transform our wider society. Growing a commons food regime

aims to broaden the scope of food governance through self-organisation for many kinds of food-related shared resources. Furthermore, by exploring the commons in respect to food-related shared resources – both tangible (such as natural resources, seeds, water and land) and intangible (such as culture and knowledge) – would provide a more accessible and inclusive way to address the critical issues of wider common resource governance.

However, our case study demonstrated that such bottom-up initiatives cannot be achieved entirely on our own. Good intentions and effective self-organisation for collective action were never sufficient to the fulfilment of our potential. This potential was at least partially dependent on the development of supporting policy and funding schemes. In this regard, we were extremely lucky to obtain such enabling conditions (e.g. UCL Public Engagement Unit and UCL Grand Challenges) in the first place, especially when the current fiscal and ideological context was not conducive to the development of the sorts of policy interventions which were widely recognised as being needed.

Therefore, there is a need for more support in creating and sustaining the sorts of conditions and infrastructures needed for a transitional period, while en route to a more sustainable society. Rather than being marginalized or ignored in the mainstream, the prospect of growing a commons food regime would need to accelerate the adaptive capacity within multiple scales of space, time and power. This engagement with the state brings out two implications. First, community food initiatives and commoners must assert their interests in politics and public policy to make the commons an integral part of reforms in law that can facilitate the development of growing a commons food regime. Second, given the fact that, in a representative democracy, the state is no longer capable of acting on behalf of the people who elect it, we also need to explore new models of non-state democratic participation. This might include the rethinking of reclaiming public services as a kind of commons and shifting from the current hierarchical model to a collaborative one. This sort of shift would require common resources to be under greater local control, self-organisation and coordination of different sources of public services and the allocation of participatory finance budgeting. Similarly, the engagement with the market also needs to consider the risk of co-option and commodification of the commons as well as continuing to demonstrate their creative and catalytic potential. For example, a number of community food initiatives in London make use of commons-based business models.

Finally, this emergent model can also represent approaches to pioneering care-based social innovations as an alternative vision of a creative and sustainable city. There are two sources of inspiration for this vision. First, in his critique of the existing urban growth concepts of creative industry and culture economy, Krätke (2011) urges us to foster debates on theory, practice and policy that go beyond market-led innovations of the city. Second, in their research on 'learning regions', Healy and Morgan (2012) point out the importance of 'capacious innovation' that concerns issues of sustainability, particular "in the wake of the ecological turn" (p.1050), and the progressive governance structure and implementation at different geographical scales.

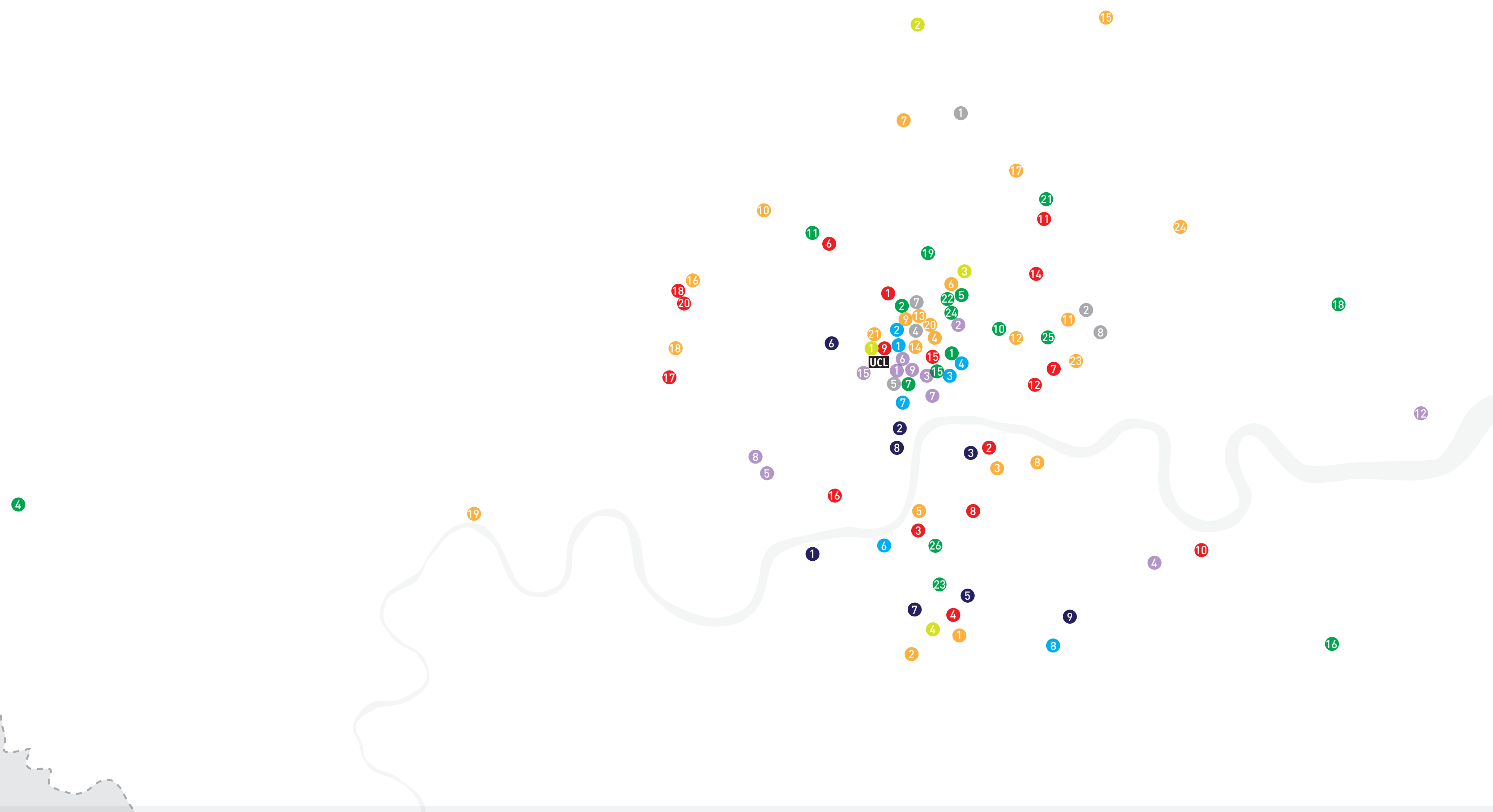
While I agree with their emphasis on the role of the state either in terms of urban governance or regional governance on the basis of a need for active engagement in real politics, I would also like to suggest a slightly different focus. As Levine explains, "any commons relies on a demanding set of norms and commitments" (2007:254), and through our ongoing engagement, we have seen how this "increases the importance

of ‘soft’ infrastructure such as trust, norms, symbols, identities and emotions for coordinating activities” (Nicholls, 2008:844). These offered participants an opportunity to redefine the world as they want it to be, as well as introducing our vision of growing a care-based commons food regime in a non-imposing manner. In a way, ‘critical spatial practice’ seemed to bring new insights into the role of art and design in creating ‘softer’ sides of the enabling conditions and infrastructures.

For generations, London has not only been a national capital but a world city which highlights its connections with wider global networks as well as its competitive position in relation to other global cities (Cochrane, 2009). Yet, for nearly 2000 years, as German and Rees (2012) remind us, London has been ‘a living monument’ and ‘a breeding ground’ for radical ideas and practices where millions of people have struggled to pursue a better future. In this regard, commoners and community food initiatives in London can function as pioneers that bring a new life for a vision into the commons – not of an inspirational metaphor, but of a lived and everyday reality – through care-based social innovations for food governance and common resources governance. In my opinion, these are concrete examples that are more than movements and ephemeral campaigns, but committed and sustained experiments, which can be brought together to enable improved conditions and infrastructures by multiple dynamic and regenerative systems with their persistence and consistency in movement, similar to a lesson, learned from the English poem of the water-mill, that they need a constant source of power, in other words, ‘keep going with it’ in the most routine everyday practice.

Through our own experience, I have been further convinced that there are already many people and communities across London and even throughout the world who desire a future outside the drive of private profit maximisation or bureaucratic self-interest. This is a rare moment in history in which the dominant systems are giving way to new possibilities. However, any transition to a new paradigm would demand that enough people find new paths to navigate this transition and make the new categories of the commons their own. Can we really afford not to take these opportunities? To actualise these possibilities, we must create and sustain the enabling conditions and infrastructure that will allow us to take advantage of the important momentum for growing a commons food regime through a community food initiative in London and beyond.

Map 4.1: Growing commons food regimes in practice through university-led community food initiatives at UCL, London



Community Self-help Food Initiatives

1. Abundance Project
2. Blenheim Gardens Edible Estate
3. Brockwell Park Community Greenhouse
4. Calthorpe Project
5. Coram's Fields
6. Culpeper community garden
7. Food from the Sky
8. Food-Up-Front, Lambeth
9. Global Generation
10. Greenwich Children's Meal programme
11. Hackney city farm
12. Hackney Community Composting Support
13. Hare Krishna, King's Cross
14. Holy Cross Trust Centre
15. Living under one sun at Haringey
16. Kilburn fruit harvesting project
17. Manor Gardens
18. Meanwhile Garden
19. Kew Bridge Eco Village
20. SOAS Good Food Society
21. Somers Town Community Association
22. Spa Hill allotment
23. Spitalfields city farm
24. The London Orchard Project

Community Food Enterprises

1. Alara wholefoods community garden
2. Bompas & Parr LLP
3. Bonnington Café
4. Brixton Village Market
5. Choc Star (multi-sited)
6. City Leaf
7. FoodCycle
8. FoodShares, London
9. Friends House
10. Greenwich Co-operative Development Agency
11. Growing Communities
12. Low Carbon Futures
13. OrganicLea
14. People's Kitchen
15. People's Supermarket
16. Pimlico Farmers' Market
17. Portabello Food Market
18. Queen's Park Farmers' Market
19. Social Farm (Lough Derg, Ireland)
20. Spice Caravan
21. Urban Bees (multi-sited)
22. Urban Wines (multi-sited)

Campaigning/Educational

1. Action Aid International
2. Camley Street Natural Park
3. Campaign for Real Farming (Oxford, UK)
4. Campaigns Reclaim the Fields / Grow Heathrow
5. Capital Growth
6. Cha-Tao Research Society (Taiwan)
7. Community Land Trust London
8. Compassion in World Farming (Surrey, UK)
9. Faith in Food Programme (Bath, UK),
10. Friends of Earth
11. Gaia Foundation, London
12. Garden City Movement (Letchworth, UK)
13. Garden Organic (Warwickshire, UK)
14. Green Hope Project of Asia-Pacific (Taiwan)
15. International Institute for Environment and Development (WC1X 8NH)
16. Jamie Oliver's School Meal Campaign (at Ealdham Primary School)
17. Making Local Food Work (The Plunkett Foundation, Oxfordshire, UK)
18. Queen's Market (Friends' of Queen's Market)
19. Share the World Resources
20. Soil Association (Bristol, UK)
21. Soil Association CSA project
22. Sustain
23. Transition Town Brixton
24. UK Food Sovereignty Movement
25. Women's Environmental Network
26. World Development Movement

Networks

1. Camden Shares
2. Good Food Partnership (Camden)
3. Green Drinks London
4. London Food Link
5. Project Dirt(web-based)
6. Royal Society of Horticulture
7. Slow Food London (Slow Food on Campus)
8. South London Vegan Society

Event-based initiatives

1. A day without money
2. Feed the 5000!
3. Fritz Haeg's Edible Estates
4. Guerrilla gardening (multi-sited)
5. Invisible Food
6. Permaculture London, Regent Park
7. Pilot Hospital Food Project, Lambeth
8. St. James Park allotment project
9. The Big Lunch, Peckham
10. The Dinner Exchange (multi-sited)

University

1. Birkbeck
2. City University
3. Central St. Martin
4. Goldsmith College
5. Imperial College
6. Institute of Education
7. LSE
8. RCA
9. SOAS Food Studies
10. University of Auckland (New Zealand)
11. University of Brighton (Brighton,UK)
12. University of East London
13. University of Melbourne (Australia)
14. University of Oxford (Oxford,UK)
15. University of Westminister
16. University of Virginia (USA)

Non-Food Community Initiatives

1. Beeja Company
2. Calverts Co-operative
3. Cooperatives,UK(Manchester)
4. CSV-RSVP Camden Networkers Programme
5. Mapping for Change
6. Principled Sustainability
7. The Hub, King's Cross
8. The Young Foundation

Non Civil Society Organisations

1. London Borough of Camden
2. London Borough of Haringey
3. London Borough of Islington
4. London Borough of Lambeth

Note: 1. Community food initiatives marked in colour under each category were the 20 case studies during the investigation documented in Chapter 3
2. Community food initiatives which are multi-sited, web-based or located outside London are not shown in this map.

4.5 Conclusion: the relevance of the integrative framework

With the two levels of learning illustrated in the previous section, we can now conclude the chapter with a brief consideration of the relevance of the integrative framework constructed for growing a commons food regime, as 'a tool of insight', to build adaptive capacity in order to transform our current food situations towards more sustainable food systems, and ultimately towards the sustainability of social-ecological systems as a whole. Four points seem particularly pertinent.

Firstly, the case study revealed an emergent model of enabling, facilitation, coordination and communication, with care as the core. With these key elements and components constructed, the integrative framework served as 'a tool of insight', to exemplify how the concept of care, as well as its associated values, could be practised within a specific context (i.e. a journey of university-led community food initiative at UCL). For example, instead of only thinking and discussing how to define values such as democracy and justice in abstract terms, we attempted to translate our ideas into concrete actions specifically within our limited capacity. It is important to highlight that with care in mind, this has helped us to create a common ground for deliberation and reflection, especially when we faced conflicting and controversial views, interests and priorities. However, it is important to emphasise that although we strove to achieve these ideals, we were constrained by our limited capacity which occasionally led to trade-offs and compromises. This did not mean an absence of integrity; rather, it highlighted the essence of collective actions in which not necessarily every participant shared exactly the same level and priority of care. It also pointed to certain kinds of fundamental challenges and struggles that we will all have to encounter and overcome, if the structural conditions are to remain unchanged. Nevertheless, these practices were carried out in the hope of creating new catalysts and exemplars by learning from one another and from what existed already around us.

Secondly, despite the fact that the case study only covered two and a half years, an increase of adaptive capacity to govern many kinds of food-related shared resources was evident among individuals, action groups, organisations and wider networks. Compared to the diagram in Map 3.1, Map 4.1 shows the growth in number and categories of community food initiatives we have engaged with since my investigation of the current landscape of community food initiatives in London and the three commons food regimes we grew. Those involved, regardless of their considerable differences in social backgrounds, political ideologies and primary interests, have been encouraged, inspired, and motivated to participate, collaborate and learn to organise themselves for a common goal. Whether conducting an urban food festival, enacting an urban food movement or publishing a radical cookbook, these individuals and groups explored, experimented, expanded and innovated the scope of food governance and even wider common resources governance through growing a commons food regime in practice. In so doing, they ignited a moment of hope, then transformed such a moment into a movement and finally realised the importance of spreading the message at whatever level might hold promise.

Thirdly, if we acknowledge that growing a commons food regime, even on the smallest scale, as our UCL case study illustrated, required considerable adaptive capacity with enabling conditions and infrastructures, it should not be a surprise that much greater

enabling conditions and infrastructures would be essential in order to build our adaptive capacity for navigating change on a larger scale. This is the key implication identified for growing a commons food regime through a community food initiative in London. In order to enhance, nurture and optimise our adaptive capacity, enabling conditions and infrastructures should be all-encompassing so that these can facilitate both the day-to-day operation as well as the creation of an epoch of history. These may include progressive regulations and public policies, finance, knowledge and skills, all with care as the core. For example, without appropriate laws and policies dedicated to improving people's material security, it would be difficult to enable the marginalised segment of the population to stand up for their rights and influence decisions that affect their everyday lives. Similarly, without enabling conditions to liberate our understanding and production of knowledge, it would be hard to integrate different forms of food governance and common resource governance.

In addition, time is another important factor which cannot be ignored. In fact, existing food regimes theory has been developed based on the definition of 'regime as accumulation' with an emphasis on the long cycles of the international political economy at a global level. On the basis of this logic, we should avoid any achievement of a commons food regime resulting from one-off events, and focus instead on enabling conditions and infrastructures to become embedded in the culture of any given 'communities' within a variety of domains. In this regard, while I agree that growing a commons food regime is, in De Angelis's (2007:247) words, like "a matter of free individuals seizing the conditions of production and reproduction of their own lives", I would also want to highlight the importance of much deeper, wider and longer struggles that we need to commit ourselves to tackling. This leads to my final point.

The fourth point relates to the theory and practice of growing a commons food regime. While it is important to recognise that particular theories are bound up with particular practices, we should consider a deeper sense of how we understand that theory itself interrelates with our practice. Although the integrative framework has proven useful as 'a tool of insight' in the UCL case study, it is worth remembering the three caveats provided in the Chapter 2. These include: (1) limited spaces to describe each element and component in depth; (2) the profound influence of my academic-activist identity on the selection of elements and components; and (3) as a first attempt to construct such a framework, it is bound to be incomplete, let alone perfect. Therefore, following Lao-Tzu's wisdom that "A journey of a thousand leagues starts from where your feet stand", the framework is rather more like a starting point for communities interested in continuing to do more work, both in theory and in practice, in a variety of fields, contexts and shared resources, across scales and levels with inclusive and long-term evaluation mechanisms.

Both theory and practice are living and changing, not static, and constantly shaped by each other. With the increasing number and diversity of empirical investigations and practices on the ground and more interdisciplinary and collaborative research between universities and communities at large, we might be able to understand better the nature and relationship between growing a commons food regime and adaptive capacity for adaptive governance to transform the current food situations into sustainable food systems and ultimately towards the sustainability of social-ecological systems as a whole. By then, we can have a solid position to assess the relevance and application of the integrative framework more precisely, and also attain the ability to improve the

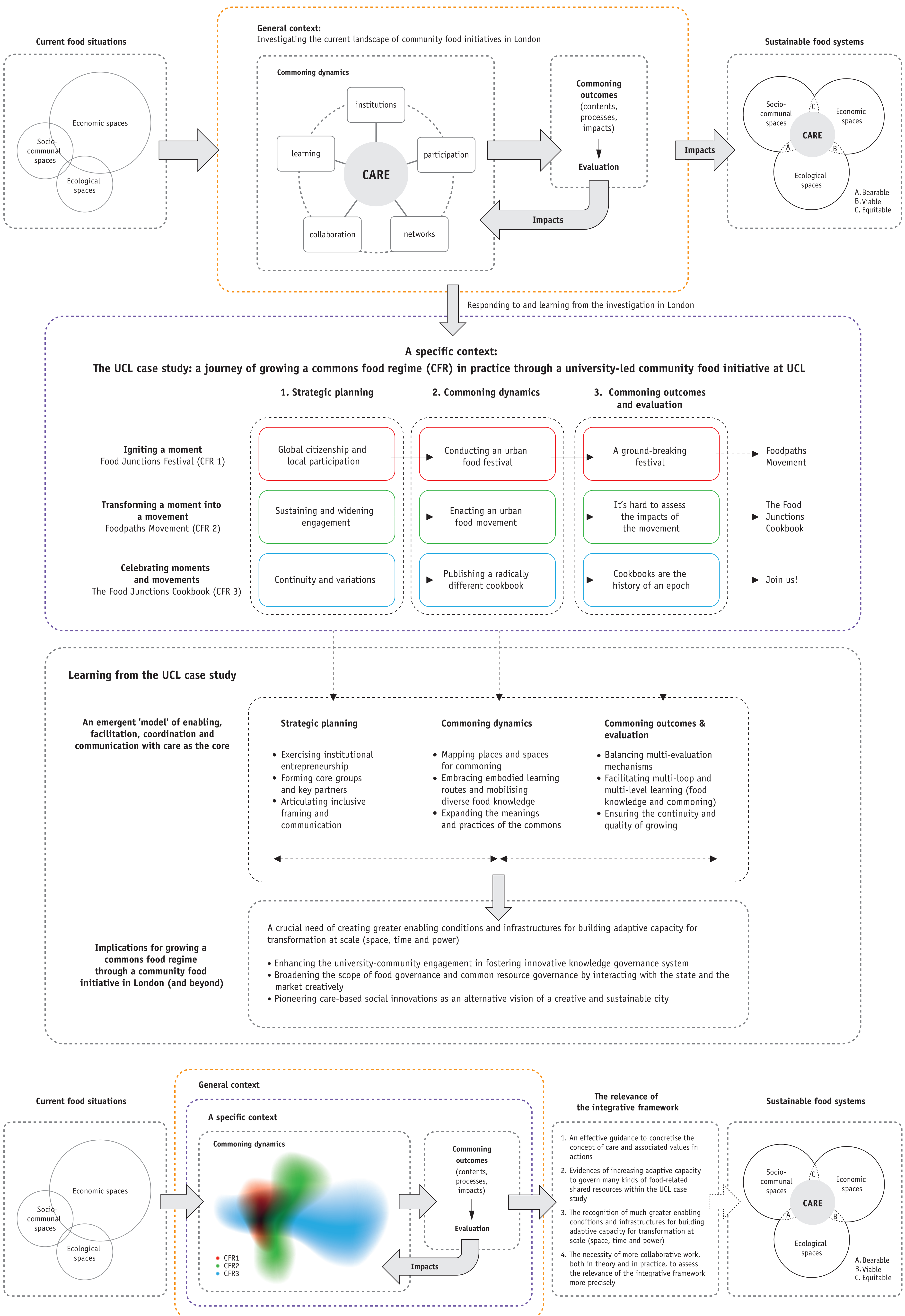
framework to that which would apply to multiple types of inquiries and practices in a complex world.

As a concluding summary, Figure 4.2 illustrates the evolution of the UCL case study. At the top, the figure starts by responding to, and learning from, the investigation of the current landscape of community food initiatives in London as a general context, marked as an orange dotted box. The second section of the figure shows a specific context – the journey of the three commons food regimes that we helped to grow through three university-led community food initiatives at UCL, marked as purple dotted box. From the simplified visual representation of the journey, we can clearly see that each regime consisted of three distinct, yet interlinked stages with subtitles highlighting the key messages which emerged from strategic planning, commoning dynamics and commoning outcomes and evaluation respectively.

The third section of the figure, learning from the UCL case study, has two aspects. Firstly, a model which emerged from the case study is provided. While these key themes were identified through inductive research methods drawn from the three commons food regimes grown above, the journey itself was more complex and fluid with more blurred boundaries among those three parts. This point is addressed by a dotted two-way arrow underneath those key themes to indicate their internal interrelationships. The second level of the learning was drawn from this emergent model and resulted in a key point that there was a critical need for greater enabling conditions and infrastructures for growing a commons food regime through a community food initiative in London and beyond. In turn, three specific implications are also presented.

Finally, at the bottom of the figure, we can see two nested boxes: the outer box marked in orange indicating the general context (i.e. the current landscape of community food initiatives in London), and the inner box marked in purple indicating the specific context (i.e. the journey of growing a commons food regime in practice through a university-led community food initiatives at UCL). Inside the purple box three overlapping and diffused colour shapes represent the three commons food regimes grown in the UCL case study. This aimed to convey the idea that growing a commons food regime is similar to a complex living system, nested within and co-evolving with wider systems. While these three commons food regimes have been through different stages of the life cycle, they were a growing enterprise in terms of growing adaptive capacity to move from the far left towards the far right. However, it is important to note that the UCL case study was conducted as a catalyst within a specific context. Therefore, while it supported the relevance and application of the integrative framework, which itself could be seen as a small step towards sustainable food systems, much work should be done, both in theory and in practice, in order to approach our vision of sustainable food systems and ultimately the global sustainability of social-ecological systems as a whole.

Figure 4.2: The UCL case study

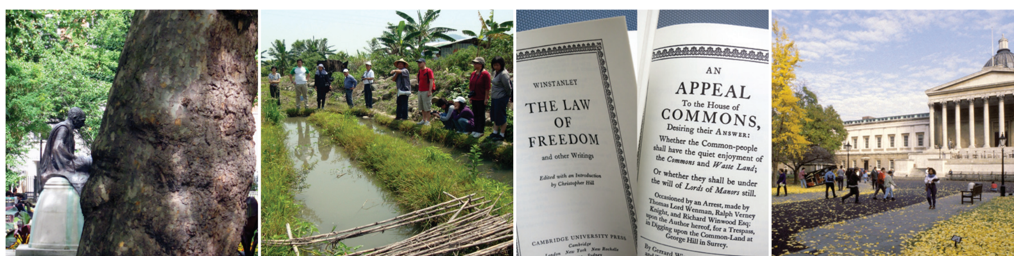


Chapter 5:
Conclusions, Reflections and Ways forward

5.1 Introduction: a photo essay

Before coming to the final conclusions, reflections and ways forward, I would like to write a few words about the photographs placed at the beginning of each chapter. These four photos can be considered a kind of small photo essay to illustrate the people, events and places that influenced the progression of this thesis. Echoing the lines of Eliot's poem of *Four Quartets* (1943), I am now, undoubtedly, both the same and yet a different person to the one who started this thesis nearly four years ago,

> *We shall not cease from exploration*
> *And the end of all our exploring*
> *Will be to arrive where we started*
> *And know the place for the first time*



The first photograph, which is in Chapter 1, is of a statue of Gandhi. It shows him meditating near a large, strong-looking tree, and this captured one of the many moments when I was wandering in the square just opposite my department, the Development Planning Unit. His famous quote, "Be the change you want to see in the world", has inspired an academic-activist like myself to follow his lead as an agent for change, individually and collectively. It has also urged me to reflect upon the role of development planning in resolving global food crises, as well as the nature of 'development planning' itself, given that the boundaries between the North and the South are increasingly blurred in the complex world we live in.

The next photograph, in Chapter 2, might make you wonder about the relationship between a photo of Taiwanese people and building theoretical foundations for growing a commons food regime. Six years ago, I was involved in a campaign against an unjust eviction of this informal settlement of indigenous people as a result of rapid urban development in Northern Taiwan. This was the first time that I had come into contact with an indigenous way of living – simple, cooperative, and caring between man and nature. Their farming system adopts many agro-ecological methods and is based on cultivating a variety of crops that are native to the site and highly adaptive to local conditions. More importantly, a vision of care outlined by an elder member of this indigenous people was a seed sown in my heart. This new paradigm suggests the harmony between humans and nature, equipped with a sort of living knowledge that integrates the past and the present, experiences and ideas, science and spirituality. Later I realised that this social pattern has been at the heart of the struggle for true food security and food sovereignty (see Perfecto et al., 2009).

The photograph in Chapter 3, taken from two pages of Gerrard Winstanley's book *The Law of Freedom*, aimed to connect my understanding of the commons and the city of London. While I was aware of the French Revolution and Marxist communism, an

encounter with an allotment holder in Brixton made me discover that Winstanley was the first person to construct an alternative political theory with the commons at its heart. The scope of his programme, highlighted by his phrase "there cannot be a universal liberty till this universal community be established" was remarkably ambitious (cited in Hill, 1983:35). This discovery, in part, reinforced a prior expectation that London, regardless of its being a root of capitalism, also upheld a tradition of radicalism. However, rather than only focusing on the people whose general stance is on the left, I have listened to Winstanley's inclusive vision carefully, "for the people of England and the whole world" (Hill, 1983:108). Thus, I have strived to look for individuals, groups and organisations across the capital who might be interested in being part of growing a commons food regime in London.

Lastly, the photograph in Chapter 4 was taken at the beginning of a new academic year in the Front Quad of UCL. I have to confess feeling somewhat arrogant at an induction lecture of my PhD programme that UCL had named itself as 'London's Global University'. I am grateful, however, to a friend for suggesting to me that I should use this term together with a set of core values we truly believe in. Walking in the campus, especially passing by the Quad, has provided me numerous opportunities to think about how to optimise the creativity and idealism of the people within the UCL community and beyond. In so doing, we have created a network of relationships that is more complex than it first appears. Over the years, I have talked to many people about this, and I have said, "Please do let me know if you have good seeds to share and the more the better". I have also invited them, formally and informally, to join us in a collective journey of growing a commons food regime.

With all this in mind, we can now come to the three sections of this concluding chapter. Firstly, in section 5.2, we will revisit the central research question, three subsidiary questions with key conclusions for each, and main contributions of knowledge. In section 5.3, the chapter moves to further reflections on growing a commons food regime. Finally, in response to these reflections, section 5.3 suggests ways forward by proposing to continue to grow care-based commons food regimes through community food initiatives at UCL.

5.2 Conclusions: responding to a call for a new food regime in the 21st century, in theory and in practice

As an academic-activist, I consider myself to have two major roles: understanding the world and participating in changing it. The purpose of this thesis has been to clearly demonstrate the possibility that we can actually engage in transforming our current unsustainable food systems in the face of a global food crisis, especially with the pressing need for strategic alliances among many food movements which aim to advance a regime change. The hope is that the research presented within this thesis helps build our adaptive capacity, individually and collectively, for this kind of transformation.

Responding to Friedmann (2005, 2009) and McMichael's (2008, 2009b) call for a new food regime in the 21st century, the central research question posed in the introductory chapter was: ***how can we grow a commons food regime as a response to a call for a new food regime in the 21st century, both in theory and in practice?*** This question aimed to highlight the importance of the dialectic between theory and practice in building adaptive capacity for community food movements to bring about systemic changes. This central question generated three subsidiary research questions, covering both theory and practice and constituting the three chapters (Chapter 2, 3 and 4) of this thesis.

The first subsidiary question is a theoretical one addressed in Chapter 2: ***how can we build theoretical foundations for growing a commons food regime?***

As 'a tool of hindsight', food regimes theory has a strong analytical power to understand the reality of contemporary global food politics and a political commitment to provoke a new direction. Yet, it falls short on explaining how we can actually engage with such a change, especially with the pressing need for strategic alliances among many food movements which aim to advance a regime change.

Inspired by the current resurgence of the commons, this thesis proposes the notion of growing a commons food regime which integrates both food regimes and commons regimes. A commons food regime is different from existing food regimes theory in the following ways. First, it emphasises the notion of the commons as the principal mode of governance. Second, because it adopts a new conception of a regime, a commons food regime moves away from the passive historical concept of food and agriculture development within the long cycle of capital accumulation to a more active one of governing food-related shared resources: i.e. commons – both tangible, such as natural resources, seeds, water, land; and intangible, such as culture, knowledge and public health. Third, as a commons is defined by a given community, which can be small or large, what counts as a shared food-related resource then becomes a political and learning process demanding contestation and deliberation, and to some extent can be seen as an experiment. This means that a commons food regime can be 'grown' with different scales and forms, depending on the size of the community and the kind of shared food-related resources a regime is governing. Furthermore, in order to grasp a deeper understanding of our 'human condition', a holistic conception of care is explored and elaborated, in the hope of building solid foundations to growing a commons food regime.

To achieve this newly conceptualised food regime, with care as the core, an integrative framework is constructed, drawing on literature from food regimes theory, commons regimes, adaptive governance and critical food studies. This framework aims at building the adaptive capacity to transform the current food crisis towards sustainability. The integrative framework constructed serves as a broad conceptual map ('a tool of insight'), both for exploring the general context and for strategic planning related to growing a commons food regime, its internal commoning (governing) dynamics (i.e. institutions, participation, networks, collaboration and learning) as well as commoning outcomes and evaluation within a commons food regime. The notion of growing a commons food regime, in this way, endeavours to enable a kind of regime change towards a caring culture and society with associated values, which can be considered as entering a new epoch of history.

Chapter 3 demonstrates an attempt to bring theory to practice. In this chapter, the second subsidiary question is addressed: ***how can we grow a commons food regime by learning from community food initiatives in London?***

The overarching aim of Chapter 3 was to investigate the current landscape of community food initiatives as a way to understand how the general context of a regime is situated. It was aimed to explore how we can grow a commons food regime by learning from community food initiatives in London. Applying the integrative framework constructed in Chapter 2 as 'a tool of insight', 20 case studies were chosen as a focus of my investigation the current landscape of community food initiatives in London.

The findings of the investigation helped me gain substantial knowledge and understanding of the relevance to growing a commons food regime in London. From this, two major conclusions can be made. Firstly, although none of the individual case studies of community food initiatives have all the elements, taking them together as a whole they demonstrated that London has great potential and opportunities to grow a commons food regime. Secondly, while the term 'commons' was unfamiliar to most of the community food initiatives and study participants, after my introduction and explanation, many of them expressed that the commons governance or a commons mode of organisation were relevant to their visions and what they were doing started to think about how to take advantage of the current interest in the commons.

In addition to these two conclusions, a number of lessons learnt had strong implications for growing a commons food regime in London more effectively. These included: (1) diversifying institutions; (2) facilitating platforms for community engagement; (3) forming networks of actors and actants; (4) creating virtuous circles for collaboration; (5) building collective knowledge and learning; and (6) fulfilling the role of university. More importantly, care was a well-understood and practised concept and special efforts should be made to foster a caring culture and community, with proper support and enabling policies and conditions, which was central to any attempt to grow a commons food regime in London.

Chapter 4 addresses the third subsidiary question: ***how can we grow a commons food regime in practice through a university-led community food initiative at UCL, London***? In responding to the opportunities and implications identified in the previous chapter, with an aim to help fulfil the role of the university in forming reciprocal connections with society, another strategic decision was made to actually grow a

commons food regime in practice at my own university, UCL. This resulted in our case study: a journey of growing a commons food regime in practice through a university-led community food initiative at UCL. In this collective journey, we managed to grow three commons food regimes, namely, Food Junctions Festival, Foodpaths Movement and *The Food Junctions Cookbook*.

The examination of the UCL case study revealed an emergent model of enabling, facilitation, coordination and communication. This model, in turn, had significant implications for growing a commons food regime through a community food initiative in London. Three major implications were: (1) enhancing the university-community engagement in fostering innovative knowledge governance systems; (2) broadening the scope of food governance and common resource governance by interacting with the state and the market creatively; and (3) pioneering care-based social innovations as an alternative vision of a creative and sustainable city.

The case study demonstrated the relevance of the integrative framework by showing how in different ways and to different degrees, both individuals and organisations, have increased their adaptive capacity to govern many kinds of food-related shared resources. This can be seen as a small step towards sustainable food systems. However, greater enabling conditions and infrastructures are urgently needed for building an adaptive capacity for transforming at scale (space, time and power). Finally, it requires more collaborative work, both in theory and in practice, to assess the relevance of the integrative framework for growing a commons food regime more precisely.

More specifically, the thesis has ***three major contributions to knowledge: theory, practice and methodology.***

Theoretically, this research firstly contributes to knowledge by identifying the relevance as well as the gaps within existing food regimes theory and proposes the notion of growing a common food regime, shifting from passive conceptualisation to active engagement in transforming our unsustainable food situations by linking commons regimes and critical food studies. And secondly, not only does this thesis provide a reconceptualization of a food regimes theory but also offers a way to achieve it by constructing an integrative framework with care in its all meanings, and representing an ‘attitude’, an ‘orientation’ and a ‘worldview’ – a way of relating to other associated values, as well as a recognition of our intersubjectivity.

By applying the integrative framework as ‘a tool of insight’, the thesis contributes to knowledge, ***practically and empirically***, in two ways. Firstly, the investigation of the current landscape of community food initiatives in London as a way of understanding the general context where a regime is located, and to explore opportunities, implications and learning to grow a commons food regime in London. Secondly, the case study, that is, a journey of growing a commons food regime in practice through university-led community food initiatives at UCL, has contributed to improving our understanding of the unique attributes and enabling conditions for growing a commons food regime, illustrated by an emergent model as well as implications for London and beyond.

Finally, ***methodologically***, by integrating both theory and practice, this thesis has developed a dialectical process of co-production of knowledge whereby the notion of growing a commons food regime has shaped and been shaped by practices on the ground. The multi-methodological approach taken in this research is in itself

a valid contribution to research in this academic field. In fact, I would argue that this multi-methodological approach illustrates an innovation of interdisciplinarity and collaborative research. This approach recognises and pursues complexity by crossing borders and multiple perspectives to reflect the numerous relationships and connections. In so doing, it can then bridge divergent forms of knowledge and meaning into convergence, not in an abstract term, but situated in specific contexts. The thesis, exemplifies a complex bricolage to become a whole with a coherent and reasoned structure. In a broader sense, my double identity of both academic and activist can go beyond the narrower scope of an 'aesthetics of bricolage' and be described simply as a bricoleur, who, according to Kincheloe (2005), not only aims to improve "the quality of research but also enhance the possibility of being human or human being" (p.347) by exploring "new insights into new ways of thinking, seeing, being and researching" (ibid).

Indeed, we human beings are both 'products' of our own systems and at the same time also the designers of a new system (a regime). Applying this more inclusive and holistic methodological approach, we expect that, over time, the integrative framework will evolve to fit better with both the elements and components which make up a commons food regime and our adaptive capacity for growing one. It is hoped that in the long run we will be able to better understand how to grow such a regime across different scales for governing different kinds of food-related shared resources, and ultimately transform the current food system to a more sustainable food system.

5.3 Reflections on growing a commons food regime

I'm sitting in front of my computer in the middle of a normal day, working on my thesis. During a short break, I take time to reply to a number of emails mostly regarding enquiries. These enquiries are about possible collaboration from students and staff at UCL and individuals, groups, and/or organisations outside UCL, mainly from London, but some of them also from far beyond. It appears that while the three event-based initiatives officially ended two years ago, our journey of growing a commons food regime still carries on.

Indeed, over the last few years, I have encountered hundreds of people interested in our work. Although most people would think that the initiatives were my projects, I always immediately point out they are all *our* projects. Community-based, self-organising and collective actions, with an emphasis on the core theme of care – showing a caring attitude to others – are the essence of growing a commons food regime. As previous chapters have shown, I have received a diversity of experiences and stories through my investigation and our own practices, which offered me room for reflections.

In effect, although only Chapter 4 is framed within an action research methodology, this thesis illustrates one of the most significant characteristics of such a methodology – an action research cycle – where a researcher consciously and constantly holds a 'dialectic' attitude and operation between action and reflection (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010). It is worth mentioning that 'action' is defined in a much broader sense, including building theoretical foundations for growing a commons food regime (Chapter 2), investigating the current landscape of community food initiatives in London as the general context to grow such a regime (Chapter 3), and our journey at UCL (Chapter 4). Each chapter can be seen as an action research cycle where 'action' is followed by reflection and ways forward. While one chapter forms the basis for the next chapter presented in this thesis, the entire action research cycle is complete with final reflections presented here. Put together, I have striven to cultivate any 'field of possibility' for growing a commons food regime, both in theory and in practice, as an academic-activist.

While I do appreciate those people who have indicated 'solutions' associated with growing a commons food regime, these proposed solutions have also helped me advance my understanding of the problems involved in suggesting 'panaceas' that might help to make social-ecological systems sustainable over time, as highlighted by Ostrom (2007:15181). I have realised that we should not expect a one-size-fits-all solution for any kind of transformation. Efforts to build adaptive capacity are much related to the learning process at different levels and with different loops and more importantly, are sensitive to local contexts as well as global developments. Precisely due to the absence of a single solution, it is even more important to keep our minds open for ongoing deliberation and reflection on the issues around growing a commons food regime.
It is out of all those dialectic and dynamic interactions between theory and practice, between us and others that make growing a commons food regime a living entity in a complex world.

In drawing back from the specific details of each chapter, I would like to share my final reflections through a discussion of four interesting questions. Since I would like to highlight the importance of a participatory and engaging approach, in this section I will make use of the dialogue form. These four pairs of questions and answers by no means

represent the diversity of comments and enquiries received so far. However, I would like to imagine these four pairs of questions and answers as a drop of water that could help to swell the ocean of our consciousness and commitment in making our community a better place to live.

Capital letters A-B-C-D represent four different people with their questions and M, my answers. It is important to note that these questions have been synthesised and paraphrased from a number of similar enquiries and debates drawn from numerous dialogues I have had over the years.

A: *You have illustrated the severity of the global food crisis, including both social and ecological factors. For many, there is a need to address both social and ecological changes at the same time. Thus, sustainable food systems cannot be achieved without an integrative approach connecting these two aspects. However, it seems to me that the social aspect has been given a higher priority than the ecological. Why is this?*

M: Armitage and Plumer (2011:299) use the expression, “It takes two to tango”, to describe the “union of social-institutional and biophysical systems in relation to adaptive capacity”, with an emphasis on the integration of the natural and social sciences. So it is right to point out that this delicate interaction between the social and ecological changes is required to achieve sustainable food systems. However, two particular reasons are pertinent for me to focus more on social aspect than the ecological in this thesis.

Firstly, I argue that there is no proper understanding of the ecological aspect without a proper understanding of the social. Just take the notion of sustainable agriculture as an example. I am not a farmer myself, but based on intellectual engagement with the current development in the field and direct involvement in community food movements, I subscribe to the idea that a sustainable future lies in a move towards small-scale farming, more diverse cropping and more low-energy and low-impact farming methods.

The mainstream view is that smallholders are hobby farmers, providing valuable landscape, biodiversity and social benefits, but are not seriously contributing to family livelihoods and national food security per se. To some extent, my empirical investigation of the current landscape of community food initiatives supported such a view although I can also argue that there are a growing number of people and groups who have started to find ways to address issues such as food productivity and creating a sustainable livelihood through farming. What is observed is that too often the debate becomes polarised between the ‘intensification’ or ‘technological fix’ and ‘small-scale ecological farming’ or a kind of hybridisation of traditional and modern systems which then raises the question on how to reconcile the two towards productivity and sustainability.

To allow a proper debate over this kind of crucial issue requires us to address the politics of the food system grounded in the assumption that sustainable agriculture is not merely a set of techniques but something that involves a critique of the politics and economics upon which these practices are based. For instance, those who support small-scale or agro-ecological farming must commit themselves to a much larger conflict, which has to encompass the political and economic shape of the entire world.

We need to commit ourselves to a vision, and, in our case, I propose the concept of ‘care’ as the core for underpinning our efforts to transform our current food systems. With care as our core we have a common ground and mind-set to clarify what problems we

are solving, who will benefit, and who will lose, how it is likely to pan out in the long term with a consideration that these questions should be situated in specific contexts of concrete reality.

This commitment to a vision leads to the second reason for giving a higher priority to the social aspect in growing a commons food regime. Ecology, by definition, is the relationship between living things and their surroundings and the social systems (resource governance regimes) precisely concerns the relationship between individuals and others. What struck me repeatedly has been the fact that there are many separate and fragmented groups undertaking relevant initiatives. Over the past years, we have tried, within a modest scope, to open new terrains to bring people together intellectually, politically, emotionally and spiritually in order to create joining forces. The need for change is urgent, but we should start afresh from fundamental principles and shared values, which obviously stems from our social systems, i.e. the way we live together with others. This is the essence of care.

B: *What do you think is the relationship between the notion of growing a commons food regime and the knowledge commons?*

M: There has been significant progress on the interfaces between ecology, economics and social sciences in the past few decades. Yet the more we analyse these interfaces, the more we recognize that our disciplinary maps do not fully capture the understanding we need to interpret the dynamic socio-ecological systems of which humans are a part. Hess and Ostrom (2007:53) point out that knowledge has an "important cultural component as well as intellectual, economic and political functions". Knowledge instils "values and assumptions which motivate human beings and inform national policies" (Pimbert, 2006:5) influencing how individuals and communities make decisions and how institutions develop policies and practices that affect people's day to day lives. Moreover, they have a cumulative effect as knowledge evolves and innovations are discovered based on foundations built by previous discoveries.

As Hess (2008) states, the knowledge commons can relate to all of the commons in some way. This understanding has a profound implication for the notion of growing a commons regime in that a higher priority should be given to the development of knowledge as the building blocks of all matters. In this particular context, I would suggest, the knowledge commons embraces different forms of knowledge and diverse routes of learning. It bridges theory and practice, covers natural resources management as well as innovative forms of participatory, networked and collaborative governance.

In fact, with the five key elements of commoning dynamics, those points made under the fifth element – learning – can be singled out as an element underpinning the entire construction of growing a commons food regime. In a similar way, the notion of growing a commons food regime can also be reframed as growing a food knowledge commons regime, if we define food knowledge in its entirety, but that is definitely another thesis.

Although in our practices we did not fully explore the potential of the current open-source model that has permitted the development of a variety of architectures and new technologies for scientific research, education, and public communication, we should not underestimate the virtue of openness (Peters and Roberts, 2011). On this note, I am interested in the recent resurgence of citizen science, particularly the notion

of extreme citizen science (Haklay, 2012), advocating science by people regardless of their backgrounds and levels of literacy and for people within the realm of general public good.

Just imagine a scenario where we set up a large collaborative and networked research project. We can invite and motivate small-scale farmers in different parts of the world, equipped with the latest technological devices, to participate in this collaborative research project throughout the entire research life cycle including formulating research questions, data collection, data analysis and interpretation and identifying ways forward. The premise is that we have to engage all our senses and sensibilities, and the scientific engagement can be useful and vital to supplement judgement based on first-hand knowledge and experience and the crafts that emerge from such knowledge.

Through this kind of radical intervention, we may have a better chance of charting the wider political and economic implications. The notion of the knowledge commons encourages people to become a new generation of responsible citizens and co-producers of knowledge. What we need is to build upon our accumulative and collective knowledge with the democratic, multi-stakeholder and systems-thinking as key principles. In so doing, we may empower people involved to become well-informed agents of change for themselves and their communities. However, all these possible transformations are not likely to occur, as Pimbert (2009) suggests us, unless we have enabling conditions that offer these small-scale farmers and other citizens adequate material security and time for democratic deliberation in the context of approaching a sustainable food system.

C: Y*ou call yourself an academic-activist and show how this identity is shaped by different strands of influence. How has this identity shaped your notion of growing a commons food regime?*

M: As I described in the Chapter 1, my academic-activist identity is shaped by four major strands of influence, namely, feminist-vegetarianism, Graham-Gibson's (2008) notion of 'performative epistemology', Marxist intellectuals, and my father. Underlying all these four influences is a belief that theory and practice are equally important to the mission of changing the world and the relationship between scholarship and activism is dynamic and living, with multiple feedback loops and different levels of reflection. From my first-hand interactions with my father, I have come to realise that the key to keeping the integration of theory and practice effective and productive is to be critical, creative and tenacious in the pursuit of my idea.

It is interesting to see the recent evolution of academic analyses of food activism, from more critical arguments which argue that food activism has been co-opted by mainstream neoliberals, to more positive accounts which demonstrate 'spaces of possibilities' in food movements and end with more reflective views that recognise the validity of both critical and positive approaches and advocate more processed-based improvements (e.g. Blay-Palmer, 2010; Goodman et al., 2012). While these academic analyses of food activism should be rightfully recognised, I have been trying to grasp the nature of changes in the context of food activism in the hope of figuring out what Larner (2003:511) calls "relevant and effective political strategies". In fact, my return to university has meant, to paraphrase Franser and Naples (2004), a conscious and deliberate stepping back from activism. This, in turn, has led me to find ways to synthesise different strands of politics of food, particularly two broad camps: the

existing food regimes theory, and alternative food networks, with an emphasis on building adaptive capacity to make our food systems more sustainable.

I understand that we need to consider whether the scale of the problem and the power relations involved are fully encompassed when growing a commons food regime. We cannot avoid or exempt ourselves from responsibility and the political pressure of international financial institutions, local and national elites, and structures of global inequality and injustice. For example, at our UCL case, although we are far removed from acquiring enough capacity to tackle all those wider issues, we have striven to navigate, negotiate and reclaim spaces for growing a commons food regime, whenever and wherever possible, to take advantage of a multi-dimensional scale – one of space, time and quantity (Gibson et al., 2000) in building our adaptive capacity. Challenges ahead are of course immense.

However, with an understanding of how neoliberalism came about from the periphery to the mainstream as a political ideology, Anderson (cited in England and Ward, 2007:262) states, "neoliberalism *itself* offers important lessons for those wanting change: do not be afraid of opposing the dominant politics of the day; … do not make compromises regarding ideas; and do not accept any established institution as immutable" (emphasis original). In my mind, growing a commons food regime reflects, even in its conflicting views and seeming contradictions, the learning gained from neoliberalism. It also reflects my enhanced academic-activist identity over the past years. I have attempted, both in theory and in practice, to broaden and deepen the notion of community food movements, and make such movements more inclusive and all-encompassing, and ultimately, perhaps, we can create a critical mass of strategic alliances for wider transformations.

Growing a commons food regime is like growing a new seed. We, all the commoners, are not only sowing different seeds, but also cultivating them with care. Over a long period of time, we may expect to see a forest and even the whole ecology grow closer to our vision.

D: *We have learned from history that vision and violence cannot be separated in the human being. It is possible that all that great literature can do, in this play between the vision and the reality, is to show awareness of this contradiction in ourselves. On what ground do you gain your optimism to realise the vision of growing a commons food regime without imposing such violence?*

M: As a big fan of the French writer Albert Camus, the ending of his novel, *The Plague*, vividly appears in my mind the moment you mention what we have learned from great literature. The doctor understands that the sounds of rejoicing and salvation have no more meaning than the ceaseless sound of the sea. The sounds move together. The violence and confusion in life is always there, even in moments of joy, as its people rejoice in their freedom from the plague. Camus offers us a sad conclusion: he knows the truth that the plague within us never leaves – a lasting record of what it is to be human. Similarly, I have witnessed a variety of 'violence', explicitly and implicitly, associated with different visions under the name of righteousness and justice. Undoubtedly food movements can hardly be an exception.

This reminds me of an earlier activism experience in Taiwan. While we celebrated a long fought battle to close down a factory polluting arable land nearby, a young mother with

three little babies came to us rather miserably. Her husband had lost his job as a worker in the factory, which meant that they, as a family, also had lost their basic survival. More ironically, as indigenous people, they used to have access to land and were able to keep their traditional way of living. All of sudden, the entire village was dispossessed from the land due to rapid industrial development and there were no alternative but to become an 'urban poor' without any security. This experience has always been a formative influence on me. Sensitivity and reflection on the contradictions within us, whether caused by structural problems such as capitalism or by the human limitations, have always been central for me.

On the other hand, I have also encouraging experiences that allow me to see some hope, however tentative they may seem. Food seems to have power to break the spell of those contradictions. The rising community food movements, including our own practices at UCL, stimulate human sensibilities, enabling us to connect to others. People have become active participants, one by one, gradually, in these movements, because they are moved by what they see, excited by people they meet and inspired by the ideas that stirred up the movements in the first place. Some have to do with new internal processes, others with external developments – necessary, even – to be part of both. Most of all, the notion of growing a commons food regime includes choices and conscious thought, a realisation of self-organisation and self-governance for collective actions based on a new set of values.

The issue of choice here is also to do with my optimism. Levinas and others have shown us that we do have capacity to learn to care, but it takes commitment and persistence. It is, therefore, a conscious choice that we all can make. I would rather choose to be optimistic believing that we human beings can and will come together, with a self-determination and a self-awakening, to learn from each other, to express our shared values, and to build love and care between us that ultimately puts us in a stronger position to change the world with the least violence possible.

I hope the above reflections at least indicate some directions of theory and practice in growing a commons food regime. So where do we go from here? As an academic-activist, it should not be a surprise that I would like to end this thesis by proposing ways forward.

5.4 Ways forward: continuing to grow care-based commons food regimes through community food initiatives at UCL

Constructing an integrative framework for growing a commons food regime aims to continuously build adaptive capacity – including knowledge, skills, readiness to explore, experiment and innovate, in the direction of any kinds of food-related shared resources governance regime. With a deeper understanding of the human condition, we have highlighted the importance of care in its all meanings. However, it is important to note that this integrative framework needs to be understood as a direction – 'a tool of insight', not a final destination. In order to continuously build our adaptive capacity, both as an ideal and in practice, in the 21st century, we should continue to grow care-based commons food regimes through community food initiatives at UCL (See Figure 5.1).

The main emphasis is an integrative design and strategic planning approach to obtain greater effectiveness. Building upon our previous experiences, at the initial stage of the project, five common themes have been identified that would contribute to advancing our accumulative and collective work. These include: (A) creating a sustainable campus; (B) developing a localised food system; (C) fostering an innovative knowledge governance system; (D) serving as an incubator and a hub for progressive transformation; and (E) enhancing UCL's strategic position as London's Global University (Figure 5.1.1).

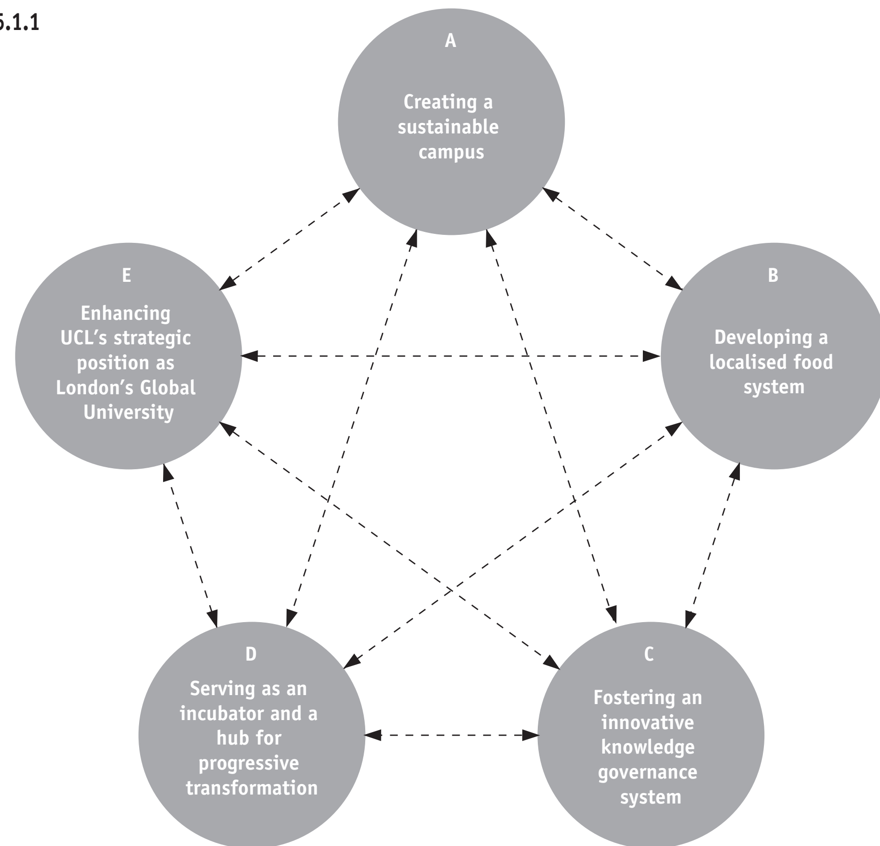
Underlying this proposed project is a new understanding of living systems that mirror life's complexity, adaptability, diversity, and creativity, with an intricate balance between the human design and the novelty of emergence. Over time, those common themes might go through different stages of the life cycle, such as expansion and decline with associated emergent structures (Figure 5.1.2 and 5.1.3). However, being a kind of purposeful human intervention, with care as the core, this project is a 'growing' enterprise in its own right: improving people's livelihoods and material security, creating a learning culture, nurturing networks of communications, encouraging trust and mutual support, and rewarding collaborative innovations.

UCL (Figure 5.1.4) serves as a starting point at least at two levels. Firstly, we believe that deeper interactions between university and the city can be the catalyst to promoting new ways of living and thinking, of which UCL is in a unique position to explore synergistic relationships between a sustainable university and a sustainable city. Secondly, food touches us in many ways and has shaped our political, cultural, economic, and social landscape. Through food, UCL can provide a more inclusive entry to address the critical issues of sustainable resources towards the global sustainability of social-ecological systems as a whole.

More specifically, the notion of community food initiatives can be carried out in diverse forms, scales, and people involved with a focus on power relations articulated and exercised. There is an increasing recognition that universities should become more open to society and vice versa. To allow for more fluid developments, we are engaging with all sorts of boundary-crossing and venturing new possibilities of reconfiguration: for example, inside and outside the university; within local and global concerns; in the

Figure 5.1: Continuing to grow care-based commons food regimes through community food initiatives at UCL: an integrative planning and design approach

5.1.1



A
- Low-carbon and renewable energy management
- Material and waste management
- Preserving urban biodiversity
- Green buildings, facilities and open spaces
- Cultivating sustainable culture and ethics for everyday practices

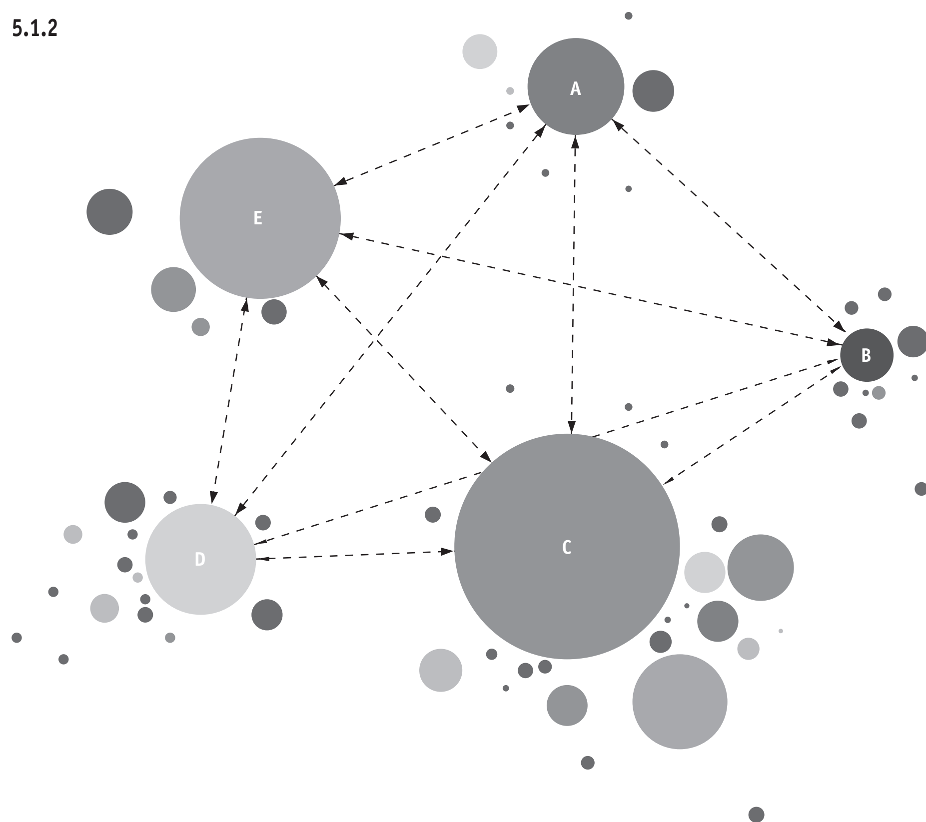
B
- Small scale and patch-work fields for sustainable and productive farming experiments (forms of urban agriculture)
- Sustainable food procurement (e.g. catering, café and community market) policies
- Student-led catering and advocating sustainable and ethical diet (e.g. plant-based diet)
- Food education and social-ecological literacy
- Promoting diversity of food cultures and food citizenship

C
- Acting as a meeting point to coordinate pan UCL Grand Challenges (i.e. Global Health, Sustainable Cities, Intercultural Interactions, and Human Wellbeing)
- Place-based but not place-bound pedagogy and learning organisation (e.g. North/South knowledge exchange and experience sharing)
- Citizen science, expert science, and co-production of knowledge
- Self-organised and commons-based knowledge governance system
- Open access policies (e.g. integrated information strategy, infrastructure and management)

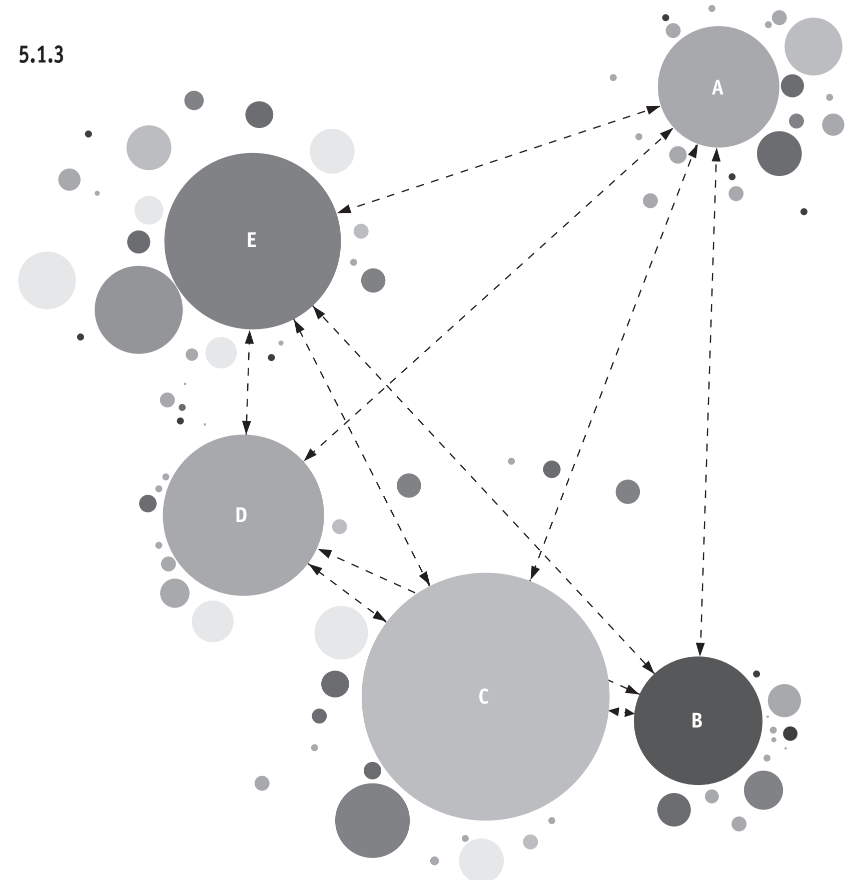
D
- Supporting social/ecological innovations (e.g. multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary eco-health centre)
- Multi-level and multi-stakeholder food policy (public, private and civil society)
- Strategic alliances for improving material conditions (especially those marginalised population) and progressive public policy
- Pilot and/or catalyst projects for community-based economy and locally managed investment and innovation funds (e.g. social enterprise, cooperative models and/or other partnerships)
- Two-way communication between university and society

E
- Demonstrating UCL's radical traditions in teaching, research, policy and wider impacts
- Exercising global leadership via local participation and embracing inclusive identities
- Generating synergistic outcomes by integrating the virtue of openness and the life of geography (e.g. principles of proximity; contextual focus)
- UCL as a test bed for London – encouraging creative visions for the present and the future of London and ultimately towards a care-based sustainability of the world
- Designing and implementing ongoing and participatory monitoring and evaluation mechanisms (e.g. effective feedback loops)

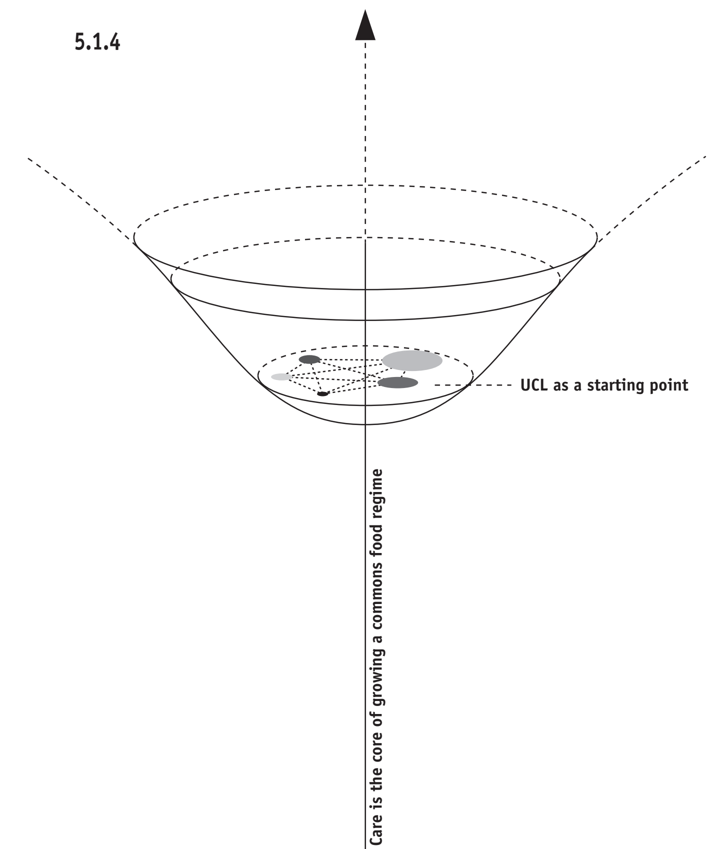
5.1.2



5.1.3



5.1.4



sciences and the humanities; in public policy and grassroots movements. Indeed, not only do universities passively respond to society's expectations, but also actively fulfil their responsibility to challenge society by shaping and reshaping it.

In a similar spirit, no matter who we are – an academic-activist, a commoner, or simply a new seed, we are never alone and always well-connected. Our proposals are rather feasible instead of fanciful as we contemplate our past and our future with a focus on the solid ground of the present. With our growing adaptive capacity, we might enter a new epoch of history. This will enable different patterns to emerge and further experiments to take place, for we have only just begun to map a world where a promise is made to govern our common resources for all and for good with care.

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