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**What is the potential of Community Supported Agriculture
to promote resilience and contribute to transition in the UK?**

PhD Thesis

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Abstract

This thesis interrogates the potential of, and constraints upon, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) to effect socio-cultural and political change in the UK. CSA is a potentially transformative yet under-developed model of agriculture that seeks to redress a range of social, economic, and environmental problems associated with conventional agriculture. There are fewer than 100 schemes in the UK at present, a total comparable to that in North America approximately 20 years ago where numbers now exceed 6000. This study, in part, addresses the potential of CSA to ‘scale up’ and ‘scale out’ across the UK.

My methodology consisted of an extended ethnographic comparison of two nascent and contrasting CSA schemes in rural west Wales and peri-urban south Yorkshire. My research methods comprised a 2 year-long *participant observation* as a member of the executive body of both case studies and simultaneous *in-depth interviews* with key CSA participants.

I argue that the *community* of CSA is reciprocally reproduced at multiple scales from the local to the global. I contend that CSA depends on different forms of *social capital* for its constitution and reproduction, although social capital is a limited and unreliable resource that, depending on its availability, can encourage or hinder the development of CSA. I argue that the *moral economy* of CSA has inherent structural tensions between ethical and economic values that CSA schemes continually navigate through a spectrum of instrumental and collaborative approaches.

I develop my previous arguments regarding the limits of social capital at my case studies and the immanent tension between instrumental and collaborative approaches to CSA to argue that both my CSAs had constrained *capacity* and were reliant on volunteerism to an extent that I characterised as a form of *sacrifice*. However both case studies retained a fragile and circumstantial *resilience* and exhibited *potential* to contribute to socio-technical *transformation*.

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Chapter 1: *Introduction*

1.1

Introduction

For me, there's something about this project, it is kind of, it is experimental but it's trying to do things, err, to maybe pioneer things for the future... if we can show on this site that you can grow all these things perfectly well, then it kind of, um, you know, if conditions get a lot worse [nervous laugh], whatever, climate change, peak oil, economic collapse kind of reasons, it is actually then, ok, there is all this land there in Sheffield, so, it's possible

Simon, Hazlehurst¹

And this is why this is important. However hard we're finding to getting members locally, I think we got to persist because, eventually, people are going to need us. And they will realise it

Gareth, COCA

This thesis interrogates the potential of, and constraints upon, Community Supported Agriculture to promote *resilience* and contribute to *transition* to a more sustainable and localised form of agriculture in the UK. CSA is a potentially transformative yet underdeveloped model of agriculture in the UK that seeks to redress a range of social, economic, and environmental problems associated with conventional agriculture. The saliency of this work can be characterised as within an *era of transition* which I identify as an emerging shift from societal dependency on oil-derived energy; uncertain effects of anthropogenic climate change; anticipated population growth; and the unpredictable and synergistic combination of these factors on global food security and environmental sustainability. Hinrichs maintains that 'the economic, social and environmental challenges now facing food systems intersect and magnify one another' (2014:144) and Kittredge claims that '(a)s the difficulties become more obvious and more costly, such a sustainable local alternative should become still more appealing' (1996:260). Furthermore, since the spike in international food commodity prices in 2007/8, food security has entered the political debate in the Global North, including the UK.

CSAs are a relatively new concept in food growing; they embody principles and practices that have the potential to be replicated and reproduced, or 'scaled up' and 'scaled out', thereby addressing issues of sustainability in the domestic food supply chain (Johnston and Baker, 2005; Mount, 2012). In the context of North America, Wells et al. claim that 'CSA multiplied, as part

¹ I identify my case studies by name but I use pseudonyms throughout to refer to research participants. In this respect I follow Cox et al. (2008) and Ravenscroft et al. (2013) who identified CSA case studies in the UK but anonymised interviewees

of an extended network of local, small-scale actions, provides a sensible and viable alternative to largescale, global-industrial food system' (1999:46) and Levkoe argues that projects such as CSAs comprise 'a new political imaginary' of local food practice (2011:700). Unlike conventional veg-box schemes CSAs permit different degrees of mediation between producer and consumer; a subscriber can choose to volunteer at the farm or can opt to merely receive a weekly veg-share without active participation. Furthermore, CSAs demonstrate an articulation with market relations through member subscription that, so far, has largely defied commodification and market capture. In the UK Community Supported Agriculture has received scant academic attention; this research claims value and originality as an in-depth extended ethnography of an under-researched field in the UK. I draw extensively on literature regarding CSA from North America to examine its relevance to the movement of Community Supported Agriculture in the UK.

1.2

Research context

Since the end of the Second World War a 'food revolution' (Lang et al., 2001:340) has occurred as food supply chains have become increasingly industrialised, rationalised and globalized (McMichael, 2000)². However, despite the relative success of the 'global vending machine' (Halweil, 2002:6), the conventional agrifood system has also been negatively associated with environmental degradation, social injustice, poor health outcomes and diminishing public trust in its products (Duffy et al., 2005; Morgan et al., 2006)³. The production of crude oil, in terms of volume, has probably peaked yet is crucial to the logistics of the global food system along its entire chain (Jones, 2001)⁴. Food production is expected to be increasingly disrupted by erratic weather events and changing seasonality allied to the effects of long-term global atmospheric warming (McMichael, 2001)⁵. By 2050 the world's population is projected to increase from the present figure of 7 billion to approximately 10 billion in parallel with rising urbanization (United Nations, 2010)⁶, and a 'nutrition transition' within developing nations (Popkin, 1993)⁷,

² See also Goodman and Redclift (1991); Hanjra and Qureshi (2010); King (2008); Koc and Dahlberg (1999); Murdoch et al. (2000) and Rulli et al. (2013)

³ See also Bailey (2011); Ericksen (2008); Feenstra (2002); Patel (2007); Stassart and Whatmore (2003) and Wiskerke (2009)

⁴ See also Aleklett et al. (2010); de Almeida and Silva (2011) and Pimentel et al. (2008)

⁵ See also Bows et al. (2012); Freedman and Bess (2011); Garnett (2008); Gornall et al. (2010); Gregory et al. (2005); HLPE (2012); Nelson et al. (2009); O'Kane (2012); Rosa and Dietz (2012); Stern (2007) and Vermeulen et al. (2012)

⁶ See also Hodson and Marvin (2010)

⁷ See also Dixon et al. (2007); MacDonald et al. (2012); Kearney (2010) and McMichael et al. (2007). Kearney characterises the 'nutrition transition' as an 'increased intake of meat, fat, processed foods, sugar and salt' in rapidly transitioning countries such as China, Mexico and Brazil (2010:280)

combining to create greater demands on the global food system (Godfray et al., 2010)⁸. Most recently the dramatic spike in commodity food prices in 2007/8 demonstrated the fragility and volatility of globalized food networks (Singh, 2009)⁹. Consequently Voget-Kleschin has described food consumption as an ‘(un)sustainability hotspot’ (2015:455) and Moragues-Faus and Morgan contend that ‘how to feed sustainably an increasingly urbanised world constitutes one of the main development challenges of our era’ (2015:1558).

Morgan and Sonnino argue that ‘a new food equation’ is emerging: ‘(f)ar from being a short-term cyclical blip, these trends suggest that we have entered a radically new era in the evolution of the capitalist agri-food system’ (2010:210); Lang concurs: ‘(t)he crisis in 2005–8 was not a blip, but creeping normality’ (2010b:95). Consequently McIntyre et al. have stated that ‘(b)usiness as usual is no longer an option’ (2009:3) and Evans has suggested that society as a whole faces the prospect of a Malthusian-style¹⁰ ‘food crunch’ as our expanding appetites inexorably exceed the limits of our natural resources (2009:7). The Chief Scientific Advisor to the UK Government has predicted a ‘‘perfect storm’’ of civil strife and international conflict based on access to resources, mass migration and widespread hunger by 2030 (Beddington, 2009). Since the 1980s the UK has increasingly relied on food importation (Marsden, 2013) but Ambler-Edwards et al. assert that ‘(t)he UK can no longer afford to take its food supply for granted’ (2009:5)¹¹. Therefore, food security has belatedly registered in the Global North as developed nation-states such as the UK seek to secure food supplies to allay social and political unrest (Beddington et al., 2011; DEFRA, 2010a; Foresight, 2011)¹². However, as Darnton

⁸ See Lang (2010b) for a full review of factors affecting the security of the global food system
See also Horrigan et al. (2002) and Young (2010) for a review of the environmental and health impacts of conventional agriculture

⁹ See also Crow (2008); FAO (2008); FAO/WFP/IFAD (2011); Gilbert and Morgan (2010); Global Food Markets Group (2010); Katz (2008); SDC (2011) and UNEP (2009)

¹⁰ ‘Thomas Malthus’ Essay on the Principle of Population warned that population increase would eventually outstrip food supply, resulting in famine. Malthus expressed his concern at a time when the amount of food energy that could be harvested from a given amount of land was constrained by the available agricultural technologies. The Green Revolution of the twentieth century challenged Malthus’ grim predictions, as fossil fuel-based fertilizers, pesticides, irrigation and mechanization greatly increased food yields. In the twenty first century, the link between population and ecological sustainability is again coming to the fore, as global food yields are threatened by ecological destruction (including climate change) and as world population grows’
(Walpole et al., 2012:2)

¹¹ For example, the Asda supermarket chain recently commissioned a report revealing that 95% of its fresh produce worth almost £370m per annum is at risk from vulnerabilities linked to sourcing, processing and logistics along its food supply chain (Price Waterhouse Cooper, 2014). See also IGD (2015)

¹² See also Ambler-Edwards et al. (2009); Barling et al. (2008); DEFRA (2006; 2009a&b; 2010b); Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee (2014); Ingram et al. (2013); MacMillan and Dowler (2012); Morgan and Sonnino (2010) and Soil Association (2008)

states, '(t)he fact that the current system is unsustainable, and that our ways of producing and consuming food will have to change, is new news to most people' (2016:5).

1.3

Community Supported Agriculture

As one response to the perceived shortcomings of globalised agrifood, a countercultural alternative and oppositional food movement originating in the US has been evolving since the late 1960s (Belasco, 1989); organic agriculture, animal rights, Fair Trade, Slow Food, La Via Campesina, and direct marketing strategies such as Farmers Markets and CSAs all exemplify the trend¹³. Collectively the movement has been styled Alternative Food Networks (AFNs)¹⁴, although the category is loose and tends to signify what they are not, rather than what they are, and their 'alternativeness' has been critiqued, as well as the dualistic codification of alternative and conventional food networks (Whatmore et al., 2003)¹⁵. Furthermore, in respect of the transformative potential of CSAs, Forssell and Lankoski maintain that 'it is hard to form a clear overall picture of the sustainability promise of AFNs' (2015:63). This research seeks to address whether Community Supported Agriculture can contribute to more localised and sustainable forms of food supply chains in the UK.

AFNs have been conceptually associated with a 'quality turn' from homogenised and potentially unsafe industrial food provisioning (Goodman, 2003; 2004)¹⁶; a re-embeddedness of food relations at comprehensible scales; the reconnection of producers and consumers; more equitable trade and labour relations; and recognition of the environmental externalities of food production (Pratt, 2007)¹⁷. In particular, the process of food *relocalization* has become totemic and intrinsic (Lapping, 2004), 'the tonic note of the alternative agrifood movement' (Allen, 2010:297). Fonte claims that 'local food has grown in recent years to assume the features of a new orthodoxy or paradigm' (2008:200).

¹³ See for example: Desmarais (2007); Fonte (2005); Holloway and Kneafsey (2000); Hudson (2005); Kirwan (2004); Lotti (2010); Martinez-Torres and Rosset (2010); Raynolds (2000); Scrinis (2007); Stagl (2002); Torgerson (2010) and Tovey (1997)

¹⁴ 'AFNs are defined in four major ways: (1) by shorter distances between producers and consumers; (2) by small farm size and scale and organic or holistic farming methods, which are contrasted with large scale, industrial agribusiness; (3) by the existence of food purchasing venues such as food cooperatives, farmers markets, and CSA and local food-to-school linkages; (4) by a commitment to the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable food production, distribution and consumption' (Jarosz, 2008:232)

¹⁵ See also Holloway et al. (2007a); Ilbery and Maye (2005a) and Watts et al. (2005)

¹⁶ For example: 'food scares': BSE, salmonella, e.coli and avian influenza; 'traceability and adulteration' such as the recent 'horse-meat scandal' in the UK; and the 'diabetes epidemic' – see Astrup and Finer (2000); Farag and Gaballa (2011) and Stassart and Whatmore (2003)

¹⁷ See also Hendrickson and Heffernan (2002); Lyson (2005); O'Hara and Stagl (2001); Renting et al. (2003); Sage (2010) and Sonnino and Marsden (2006b)

Community Supported Agriculture is exemplary of the *'turn-to-the-local'* and the reconnection of consumers with the source of their produce (Feagan, 2008:162). A significant component of AFN literature relates to CSAs, and the experience of North America in particular, where they are most prevalent (Allen, 2010; Charles, 2011; Lamine, 2005). CSAs involve a direct relationship between producers and consumers (who are frequently one and the same), whereby members invest in a share of the season's fruit and vegetable harvest; internalise the risks associated with growing; and accept seasonal variations in the type, quality and volume of produce (Cone and Myhre, 2000; Farnsworth et al., 1996; Fieldhouse, 1996)¹⁸. Feagan and Henderson, state that 'sharing and support emerge as the central philosophical tenets of the "model" CSA' (2009:206). According to Schnell:

In the "classic" CSA, shareholders pay up front for a season's share of the harvest, and then, each week, they receive their share of that harvest. The shareholders shoulder risks - of droughts or disease, for example - along with the farmers; in a good year they receive an abundance of produce, and in bad years they may have some lean weeks

(2007:558)

There are also adaptations of Community Supported Agriculture including meat, fish and bread CSAs, and CSAs that provide other produce in addition to the veg-share. For example, my case study CSA in west Wales offered meat reared on the host farm and organic milk sourced from a nearby farm. There are also CSA memberships based on particular constituencies such as churches ('congregation-supported agriculture'), union membership, institutions such as schools and other government agencies, and restaurant-supported CSAs (McLaughlin and Merrett, 2002)¹⁹.

Although CSAs are most numerous in North America, and the majority of literature relating to CSA emanates from this region, there are many other variations of Community Supported Agriculture across the globe. The next largest concentration is in France where they are known as AMAP²⁰ comprising at least 2000 examples (European CSA Research Group, 2016)²¹. There are other European versions of CSA in Germany, Switzerland (ibid), Belgium (Bloemmen et al., 2015; van Gameren et al., 2014); Italy (Brunori et al., 2011, 2012; Fonte, 2013); Austria, (Schermer, 2015) Hungary (Balázs et al., 2016) and Holland (van de Kop et al., 2008).

¹⁸ See also Brehm and Eisenauer (2008); Groh and McFadden (1997); Henderson and Van En (2007) and Keech et al. (2009)

¹⁹ In North America I helped a CSA farmer to deliver multiple veg-shares to an office block

²⁰ AMAP - Association pour le Maintien d'une Agriculture Paysanne (Association for Maintenance of Peasant Agriculture)

²¹ See also Lagane (2015)

Elsewhere, there are also CSAs in Canada (Dyck, 1994; Frick et al., 2014; Sumner et al., 2010); Australia, (Lea et al., 2006; Hawkins et al., 2003), China (Chen, 2013; Shi et al., 2011), and Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mali, India and Taiwan (Urgenci, 2015).

The concept of CSA originated over 50 years ago in the Far East:

The idea of community-supported agriculture was born in Japan in the mid-1960s. A group of women, dissatisfied with imported, processed, and pesticide-laden food, made arrangements directly with farmers to provide natural, organic, local food for their tables. Literally translated, the Japanese word for the arrangement, *teikei*²², means “partnership” or “cooperation.” However, the more colorful translation usually given by Japanese participants is this: “food with the farmer’s face on it”

Schnell, 2007:552

The model subsequently migrated to Europe in the late 1960s and thence to North America where the first project and the term Community Supported Agriculture²³ were instigated in the Berkshire Mountains of Massachusetts in 1986²⁴ (Henderson and Van En, 2007)²⁵. North America currently has the largest number of CSAs anywhere in the world; a database of CSAs in North America holds details of over 6000 CSA projects that include every US state (LocalHarvest²⁶, 2015). However, the 2012 farm census conducted by the United States Department of Agriculture reported that 12,617 farms had ‘(m)arketed products through

²² ‘Most Teikei bring together several different producers. As farms are usually small, an isolated producer can not provide varied assortments and a sufficient quantity of products for a large group of consumers’ (Lamine, 2005:327). See also Kondoh (2015) and Parker (2005)

²³ ‘We finally decided on Community Supported Agriculture, which could be transposed Agriculture Supported Communities and say what we needed in the fewest words. CSA to ASC was the whole message. We knew it was a mouthful and doesn’t fit easily into conversation or text, but to this day I can’t think of a better way to name what it’s all about’ (Van En, 2007:xiv)

²⁴ ‘In Geneva, Switzerland, a food-alliance of producers and consumers was launched in the 1970s, probably following a Chilean example. Jan Van der Tuin started the first project, a biodynamic farm near Zurich, named Topanimbur, having the same principles like CSAs nowadays. In Germany, in 1968, Heiloh Loss and Carl-August Loss decided to donate their property to a land trust. Through this action, Trauger Groh and other people could start an experiment according to their own principles and ideas of sustainable agriculture and of a good way of living together in a community. They leased the farm and started to apply their concept on it. It was only in 1988 that the Buschberhof was officially named CSA. Groh started a community supported farm in 1986 in the USA, the Temple Wilton Community Farm, on the model of the Buschberghof, where he had worked for 20 years. At the same time, Jan Van der Tuin brought the CSA concept to the USA, too’ (Schlicht et al., n.d.:4)

²⁵ See also Brehm and Eisenauer (2008); Farnsworth et al. (1996); Golland (2002) and Hinrichs (2000)

²⁶ ‘LocalHarvest connects people looking for good food with the farmers who produce it. Our directory lists over 30,000 family farms and farmers markets, along with restaurants and grocery stores that feature local food’

Source: <http://www.localharvest.org/about.jsp>

community supported agriculture' (USDA, 2014:558). Galt has argued that the census has systematically over-counted CSA farms and that, after standardization, the true number is likely to be close to the Local Harvest figure of approximately 6000 (2011).

In the UK the first CSA, called Earthshare, was established in 1994 near Forres in Morayshire (Cox et al., 2008). The Soil Association has been instrumental as a partner of the *Making Local Food Work* (MLFW)²⁷ programme in seeding in excess of 50 new CSAs in the UK, the average age of a CSA in the UK being currently less than 10 years (Soil Association, 2011a&b)²⁸. However, the concept has not significantly gained momentum. According to the Soil Association, there are fewer than 100 functioning CSAs in the UK at present²⁹, the largest concentration being in the south-west region (Charles, 2011; Soil Association, 2011b). Despite rapid expansion in North America over the past 30 years, CSAs remain a niche segment of the UK agricultural sector. This research, in part, seeks to consider whether a trajectory of growth similar to that experienced in North America over the last 30 years is feasible and likely in the UK.

1.4

CSA case studies

In order to understand the transformative potential of Community Supported Agriculture I adopted an ethnographic approach to research the phenomena in their natural setting (Evans, 1988; Lareau and Shultz, 1996). I immersed myself in two CSA schemes to understand the meaning, context, processes, and any unanticipated issues, concerns and influences that comprised the case studies, their membership, and associated individuals (Maxwell, 1998). I employed a combination of participant observation and in-depth interviews with key CSA figures and CSA membership to gather my primary data over a period of two years.

²⁷ 'Making Local Food Work (www.makinglocalfoodwork.co.uk) commenced in 2007 and was a 5-year, £10m Big Lottery Fund funded programme that helped people to take ownership of their food and where it comes from by supporting a range of community food enterprises across England'

Source: <http://www.makinglocalfoodwork.co.uk/news/news.cfm/newsid/237>

²⁸ 'Despite recent growth CSA remains a niche element of local food sector and a tiny part of England's food system as a whole, though one with potential for growth. Crude extrapolations from the available data suggest that CSA initiatives in England currently work over 3,200 acres (approximately 1,300 hectares) of land, count at least 5,000 trading members and have a combined annual turnover of over £7,000,000. As a proportion of total figures for England, CSA initiatives therefore count a little over 0.01% of the total population as members and work under 0.01% of England's total farmland' (Soil Association, 2011a:13)

²⁹ 'We tend to say that at the last count there were over 80 trading CSA with around 150 in development but that was in 2011' - personal email communication with Rachel Harries of the Soil Association: 5th March 2015

There are generally recognised to be four types of CSA model (Wilkinson, 2001; Soil Association, n.d.,a). My case studies were selected because they comprised an example of each of the two most typical models: *farmer-led*³⁰ and *community-led*. In addition, the CSAs were further defined by their geographical situation; one case study in rural Wales; the other on the peri-urban fringe of Sheffield. When I initiated my fieldwork both CSAs had been established for approximately three years and were of a similar scale, comprising 30-40 subscribers. Therefore my contrasting but similar case studies permitted an examination of the similarities and differences between my case studies, their membership, and associated individuals.



Figure 1: Entrance to Hazlehurst, Sheffield, south Yorkshire

Source: the author

Hazlehurst Community Supported Agriculture Co-operative³¹ was initiated in 2009 (see figure 1). The project was chosen to spearhead the newly-formed Transition Heeley-Meersbrook, an environmental group in Sheffield concerned with issues of sustainability³²:

³⁰ My characterisation of COCA in Wales as a *farmer-led* CSA was disputed by some of the key participants who perceived the project as another *community-led* CSA, or at least a hybrid of the two categories

See Chapter 3 for a description of my case studies (p.52)

³¹ Hereafter referred to as 'Hazlehurst'

(W)e thought it much easier for people to engage if there is something on the ground. So food was coming out as the [emphasises] interesting thing

Sasha, Hazlehurst

Barr and Devine-Wright state that ‘many transition groups have focused on food as a key access point for engaging individuals’ (2012:529). Hazlehurst has approximately 40 subscribers; members choose from three sizes of veg-bag. The scheme was based on leased agricultural land on the edge of Sheffield in south Yorkshire. Caerhys Organic Community Agriculture³³ was formed in March 2010. The CSA is situated on 4 acres of Caerhys Farm, a pre-existing organically-certified farm of 120 acres close to St Davids in Pembrokeshire, west Wales. COCA also has approximately 40 members; it is possible to either receive a full or half-share of vegetables (*see figure 2*).



Figure 2: Caerhys Farm, site of COCA, St Davids, west Wales

Source: the author

³² ‘The Transition Movement aims to mobilise community action and foster public empowerment and engagement around climate change, with the objective of preparing for a transition to a low-carbon economy’ (Seyfang and Haxeltine, 2010:6)

³³ Hereafter referred to as ‘COCA’

In the previous sections of this chapter I introduced my research question and its context, the concept of Community Supported Agriculture, and my two CSA case studies. In the final section I outline the content and argument of my thesis.

1.5

Thesis structure

In Chapter 2: *Literature Review* I begin by describing how the concept of Community Supported Agriculture relates to existing academic literature on food geographies. I then trace literature concerning Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) of which CSA can be regarded a component. Subsequently I describe the concept of *socio-technical* transitions and propose that CSAs typify a form of *grassroots innovation*. I argue that CSAs can be regarded as a means of *social resilience* in the context of uncertain and unsustainable landscape pressures such as fossil fuel dependency, climate change, and population growth. I conclude the chapter by reviewing literature on Community Supported Agriculture derived predominantly from North America. I use this literature to foreground and inform the content of my three results chapters: *Community and Social Capital*; *Moral Economy*; and *Viability, Capacity and Sacrifice*.

In Chapter 3: *Methodology* I describe the methodological approach that I adopted and the ontological assumptions that underpin my research. I explain how my ethnographic methods were appropriate for identifying issues and concerns inherent to CSA schemes which either promote, or impede, the transformative potential of Community Supported Agriculture. I outline the research design, including a description and justification of the case studies that I chose in order to address my research question: *What is the potential of Community Supported Agriculture to promote resilience and contribute to transition in the UK?* I describe my research approach of *observer as participant* (Dawson, 2010), reflect on my *positionality* as a researcher and a key participant in my two CSA case studies, and consider the methodological difficulties of simultaneously *doing research* and *being a participant*. I describe how I analysed my empirical data using Grounded Theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) to develop dominant themes which became the organising principles of my subsequent results chapters.

Chapter 4: *Community and Social Capital* is the first of three results chapters. The concept of community has been regarded as axiomatic to the composition of Community supported Agriculture, yet it is a highly contested term in the realm of academic social science literature. Furthermore, although community participation is regarded as fundamental to the constitution and reproduction of Community Supported Agriculture (Hayden and Buck, 2012), authors such as Pole and Gray (2012) have argued that community is a weak component of CSA schemes. CSAs have also been critiqued as insular communities of social homogeneity; Guthman (2003) and Hinrichs (2003) have argued that CSAs have limited transformative potential due to their tendency to be socially exclusive and to reproduce privileged relations of class.

I use the lens of *social capital* and *place* and *interest*-based communities to interrogate the concept of community at different scales at both of my case studies. According to Firth et al., *social capital* 'is widely used as a means of explaining ways in which communities or individuals might (or might not) connect in a variety of community, civic, cultural or economic structures and contexts' (2011:557). Firth et al. also make a distinction between *place* and *interest*-based communities (ibid). I employ these analytical framings in tandem to consider the potential and limitations of CSA within the immediate settings of the communities of veg-share subscribers, and as a broader 'community of CSA interest'.

I describe the function of *social capital* at community activities and events at the site of the case study CSAs; secondly, I depict *interest*-based communities of CSA based on regional, national and global networks; and finally I discuss the limitations of community in the setting of each CSA. I argue that CSAs rely on community in different forms of *social capital* for their constitution and reproduction at differing scales. However, *social capital* is a limited and capricious resource that, according to its availability, at once stimulates or hinders expansion and development of Community Supported Agriculture. I maintain that although community is perceived as integral to the concept of CSA, the transformative potential of Community Supported Agriculture is constrained by difficulties in engaging their existing membership and the challenges of bridging existing class distinctions in society.

In Chapter 5: *Moral Economy* I consider how the ethical dimensions of Community Supported Agriculture circumscribe it as a model of agriculture with radical potential to promote *resilience* and contribute to *transition*. I begin by arguing that all economies, including CSAs, are hybrid entities conditioned by moral and financial considerations. I use the analytical framing of *moral economy* to outline immanent tensions that arose in the context of my two case studies between the ethics and economics of creating and operating a CSA scheme. CSA membership is predicated on a set of values such as supporting local agriculture and internalising the risk of production. Holloway et al. claim that 'the differentiation between producers and consumers evident in mainstream food provisioning is blurred' in CSAs (2007b:12). However, I argue that there is an intrinsic tension between the ethics of CSA and the economics of attracting and retaining a membership. I follow Feagan and Henderson who developed 'a framework of three interrelated though distinct categories of participation - *instrumental*, *functional*, and *collaborative*... to describe and order the perceptions, practices and issues around CSA operation' (2007:203), whereby *instrumental* connotes a predominantly economic orientation, *collaborative* as a primarily ethical bearing; and *functional* as a combination of both approaches.

I describe broad *structural* tensions between the founding ethical principles of CSA and the exigencies of operating in the market economy that I situate along the *instrumental/collaborative* continuum. In the second section I describe *moral* tensions at my case study in Sheffield in respect of *governance* and *permaculture*, as founding participants sought to initially formalise the ethics and vision of the CSA. Finally, I illustrate implicit *operational* tensions that arose at my case study in west Wales as key members sought to balance moral beliefs with financial obligations. I describe the introduction of *boxing-up* and *remote hubs* to discuss how the original ethical vision of COCA was modified to accommodate consumer-orientated member expectations. I argue that, although CSAs can be situated as a social enterprise comprising social and environmental (*collaborative*) aims, the *moral economy* of CSA is constantly in tension with the imperative to satisfy dominant market values concerning choice, convenience and cost, and financial (*instrumental*) constraints regarding their ability to extract sufficient economic capital from the market.

Chapter 6: *Viability, Capacity and Sacrifice* is my final results chapter. I develop the argument that I made in Chapter 4 regarding the limits of social capital and in Chapter 5 concerning the inherent tension between the ethics and economics of CSA. In North America DeLind claims that ‘farmers and members negotiate their respective positions across a more personable market divide’ (2003:203) but Hinrichs observes that CSAs must still “‘get the prices right’” in order to remain viable (2000:301). I argue that the transformative potential of Community Supported Agriculture depends on their *viability* which I examine in terms of two key themes that informed this concept at my case studies: *capacity* and *sacrifice*.

I begin this chapter by discussing financial considerations that were common to Hazlehurst and COCA concerning expenditure; pricing strategies; and sources of funding. I then situate CSAs as *social enterprises* and a form of *diverse economy*. I draw on Offer’s concept of the ‘gift economy’ (1997) to argue that participants of CSAs are enmeshed in webs of obligation to each other through the reciprocal processes of *gifting* and *regard*. I then use the concept of *capacity* to examine the *viability* of my case studies. I maintain that the *organisational* capability of the CSAs depends on a level volunteerism that, *in extremis*, can lead to “burn-out” of participants. I also discuss the limited *growing* capacity of my case studies related to a narrow skills base and insufficient labour resources. In the final section of the chapter I argue that the extent of volunteerism amongst key participants, such as growers and those who assist on the executive bodies of CSAs, can be considered a form of *sacrifice*. I conclude by describing how CSA members who receive veg-shares are also obliged to *sacrifice* the quality, quantity and seasonality of the produce they receive. I contend that the potential of Community Supported Agriculture to realise a more sustainable and localised form of agriculture is dependent on, and

simultaneously constrained by, the capacity of a community of subscribers that are committed to the principles and dedicated to the praxes of sacrifice which CSA membership demands. I argue that the viability of my case studies was always temporary, coincidental, and inevitably fragile, thereby limiting their resilience and transformative potential.

Lastly, in Chapter 7: *Conclusions* I address my main research question to consider the potential of Community Supported Agriculture to promote *resilience* and contribute to *transition* to a more sustainable and localised form of agriculture in the UK. I begin by providing an in-depth sequential discussion of my three results chapters: *Community and Social Capital*; *Moral Economy*; and *Viability, Capacity and Sacrifice* which I relate to the concepts of *resilience* and *transition*.

Secondly, I expand my arguments in the preceding discussion to consider the *transformative potential* of my CSA case studies and the movement of Community Supported Agriculture in the UK. I argue that CSA in the UK is most likely to transition through *replication* of small-scale CSA initiatives. I claim that the transformative potential of Community Supported Agriculture is limited by the community of members which is integral to CSA, and by a disadvantageous policy landscape.

However, I argue that my case studies demonstrate transformative potential through their ‘diverse economies’; their extended spatial communities of CSA; and by the transformation in personal sustainable practices engendered by CSA membership. I maintain that each of my case studies comprised aspects that are simultaneously progressive and reactionary but, although both CSAs have transformative potential, it is muted by intrinsic and extrinsic circumstances. I argue that Community Supported Agriculture may not coalesce into a discrete and coherent socio-technical transition, but derives significance according to ‘the ideas it has set in motion’ (Ostrom, 2007:118).

In the following section of the Conclusions chapter I outline my main research findings according to their *empirical*, *conceptual* and *practical* significance. I differentiate my findings as *empirical* to describe the results of my fieldwork at my case studies; *conceptual* in terms of their relation to prior academic knowledge; and *practically* according to how my findings may instruct future practice and policy for CSA initiatives and the movement of Community Supported Agriculture in the UK.

Empirically, I discuss how my case studies are dependent on social capital that is constrained and capricious, and limited by its narrow constituency. However, I also depict the extended networks of CSA community that Hazlehurst and COCA belong to. I claim that the moral

economy of Community Supported Agriculture is at variance with conventional consumer expectations of choice, convenience and cost which is a hindrance to its transformative potential. I argue that members interact with CSAs along a spectrum of commitment and that CSA schemes adopt a range of ethical and practical approaches. However, I state that the hybridity of the CSA model is a strength that encourages replication in different circumstances. I maintain that Community Supported Agriculture in the UK is compromising its founding principles in a truncated and expedited form compared to a similar process previously observed in North America. I argue that my case studies are financially vulnerable due to the limited capacity of those that participate in growing and administrative functions. I describe how Hazlehurst and COCA performed 'diverse economies' to become more economically resilient.

Conceptually, I state that sacrifice was a central feature of the ethos and practice of Community Supported Agriculture which applied to producers *and* consumers at my case studies. I argue that key individuals who participate as members of the executive body of the CSA and, or, assist with cultivation extend themselves to a degree that can be conceived of as a form of sacrifice. I also describe how members who receive a veg-share are obliged to sacrifice conventional standards of choice, convenience and cost. I then argue that CSA does not challenge the incumbent political economy because it predominantly reproduces currency-based exchanges. Lastly, I claim that Community Supported Agriculture can be conceived of as multi-scalar sustainability niche that traverses spatial scales from the local to the global.

Practically, I argue that my case studies are precarious examples of grassroots innovation that, notwithstanding their challenging circumstances, have the potential to inform socio-technical transitions. In the context of my two case studies I claim that farm-based CSAs may be more resilient according to their access to a broader range of resources. I describe how low perception of the concept of Community Supported Agriculture, even amongst existing CSA members, stifles expansion, combined with an absence of support within the UK institutional landscape. Training and knowledge transfer are two forms of assistance that could accelerate replication of CSAs in the UK. There is also a need for Community Supported Agriculture to coalesce into a more coherent and recognisable movement; NGOs such as CSA Network UK are likely to be significant actors in codifying and promoting the concept.

I continue the chapter by situating my findings as a *contribution* to the academic literatures of *Alternative Food Networks*; *Community Supported Agriculture*; and *Socio-technical transitions* and *grassroots innovations*. My research indicates that AFNs are contradictory and contested social constructions which constantly negotiate immanent practical and ethical tensions. My study illustrates that CSA members participate along a spectrum of commitment, in terms of *practical* assistance and *ideological* engagement. I claim that my investigation of two

contrasting CSA case studies is a significant contribution to the small body of UK academic literature in this field. I maintain that my research provides a valuable and extensive insight into the day-to-day workings and challenges of establishing and operating CSA schemes in the UK. My contribution is further enriched and distinctive because my case studies were situated in two contrasting rural and urban settings.

My research contributes to a small corpus of work that employs transitions theory as an analytical framework of local food systems. The limited capacity of Hazlehurst and COCA illustrates that grassroots innovations are predominantly preoccupied with their own reproduction rather than contributing to broader socio-technical transitions. I claim my case studies are evolving into more ‘intermediate’ socio-technical niches with greater potential to transition into mainstream regimes, although this may constrain their transformative potential. Furthermore, grassroots innovations specifically have a place-based dimension that is frequently disregarded in transitions literature.

I then describe the *limitations* of my research concerning my data set and the scope of the inquiry and I propose possible avenues of *future study* relating to Community Supported Agriculture in the UK. In the closing section I return to my central research question to make some *final conclusions* concerning the transformative potential of Community Supported Agriculture to promote *resilience* and contribute to *transition* to a more sustainable and localised form of agriculture in the UK.

1.6

Conclusions

In this chapter I introduced how my research considers the transformative potential of Community Supported Agriculture. I identified the context of this study as an emerging shift from societal dependency on fossil fuels; the unpredictable outcomes of climate change; anticipated population growth; and the uncertain and interdependent combination of these factors on food security and environmental sustainability. I argued that these drivers for a more sustainable and localised form of agriculture are becoming ever more compelling and urgent. I portrayed Community Supported Agriculture as an underdeveloped sector of the UK agricultural landscape and suggested that CSA presents a new set of social and economic relations that can address some of the negative aspects of sustainability associated with globalised conventional agriculture. Despite rapid growth in North America over the last 30 years, CSAs remain in their infancy in the UK. This research partially attempts to understand whether the growth of the movement in North America is feasible and likely to be replicated in the UK.

In particular, this study seeks to identify issues and concerns that encourage, or impede, the transformative potential of CSAs to promote *resilience* and contribute to *transition* towards a more sustainable and localised food system in the UK. I argued that *community* was a distinctive, yet problematic, tenet of Community Supported Agriculture and I described how I use the concept of *social capital* to investigate different forms of CSA community at various scales. I maintained that Community Supported Agriculture is distinguished from conventional agriculture by a particular set of values that I interrogate through the lens of *moral economy*. Lastly, in the context of the foregoing chapters, I contend that the transformative potential of CSA depends on the *viability* of this model of agriculture that I explore through the themes of *capacity* and *sacrifice* which were dominant at my case studies.

In the following chapter I review academic literature that presages the content of my empirical research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1

Introduction

In order to situate my central research question regarding the transformative potential of Community Supported Agriculture, I use this literature review to locate my study amidst academic research associated with socio-political transformations and local food supply networks. The writing I refer to is organised into four discrete sections: in the first section I outline the development of literature relating to geographers and other social scientists in respect of food and I position my research on Community Supported Agriculture as an extension of this expansive genre. Secondly, I focus on the literature of Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) and discuss the related concepts of the *quality turn*, *embeddedness* and *alternativeness* that are varyingly characteristic of Community Supported Agriculture. In the third section I describe the literature of *socio-technical transitions*, *grassroots innovations*, and *social resilience* and I situate Community Supported Agriculture as a manifestation of these three related theoretical approaches. In the final section I refer predominantly to literature specific to Community Supported Agriculture that emanates from North America. I draw on writing that foregrounds dominant themes in my subsequent results chapters: *Community and Social Capital*; *Moral Economy*; and *Viability, Capacity and Sacrifice*.

2.2

Geographies of food

Community Supported Agriculture represents a single strand of counter-cultural responses to the deficiencies and shortcomings of mainstream food provisioning (Belasco, 1989). A spate of popular books including *Fast Food Nation* (2002) by Eric Schlosser, *The Omnivore's Dilemma* (2006) by Michael Pollan, and *Hungry City* (2008) by Carolyn Steel has drawn public attention to the hazards and limitations of the conventional food system. Simultaneously this trend has been paralleled by what Jackson et al. (2006) and Cook et al. (2013) likewise identify as an 'explosion' in academic writing on food. Food research now extends across multiple related disciplinary fields of the social sciences such as geography, sociology, anthropology, politics and economics. However, Goodman and Sage maintain that 'there is almost nothing more *geographical* than food in the ways that it intimately interlinks production and consumption, nature and society, bodies and landscapes, the global and the local, and indeed spaces, places and everywhere in between' (2013:1, my italics).

Winter (2003b) describes a trajectory of food-related geographical writing arising from a research emphasis on raw food commodities and descriptive retail geographies of food in the sub-discipline of economic geography. Both of these fields were confined to the *production*

dynamics of food. However since the 1980s, geographers and political scientists have adopted a more critical analysis of food and its relations with capital through the prism of Political Economy (Friedmann, 1993; Goodman and Watts, 1997; McMichael, 1993; Mintz, 1985) and subsequently academics have framed food within vertically-integrated Systems of Provision (SoP) governed and regulated at different spatial scales such as the state and the European Union (Fine and Leopold, 1993; Fine, 1994; Marsden et al., 2000). A separate body of literature has sought to trace the material transformations of food as it progresses along supply chains and the narratives that are employed to present and promote foodstuffs (Cook and Crang, 1996; Cook et al., 2004; Goodman, 2004).

Subsequently geographers, and especially their colleagues in rural sociology, have begun to consider the relationships *between* production and consumption pertaining to food (Goodman and DuPuis, 2002; Guthman, 2002; Holloway et al., 2007b; Lamine, 2005; Stassart and Whatmore, 2003). According to Holloway et al., this trend reflects an attempt to ‘theorise production–consumption as a *relational* set of practices in an attempt to overcome a conceptual divide between production and consumption’ (2007b:2, my italics). An influential tool in this critical analysis is Actor–Network Theory (ANT) that seeks to dissolve distinctions between production and consumption and to attribute meaning and agency to the material and ‘the symbolic economy of food’ (Jarosz, 2000; Lockie and Kitto, 2000:15; Murdoch, 2000). The ethos and practice of Community Supported Agriculture seeks to transcend conventional distinctions between customers and farmers by encouraging hybrid roles comprising partnership and mutuality; in Chapter 5 I examine the divergent identities of CSA participants. More recently geographers have been concerned with food *access* including food deserts (Alkon et al., 2013; Hallett and McDermott, 2011); food security (Bradley and Herrera, 2016; Kneafsey et al., 2013); and the associated movements of food sovereignty (Ayres and Bosia, 2011; Larder et al., 2014; Leitgeb et al., 2016) and food justice (Bradley and Galt, 2014; Kneafsey et al., 2017; Tornaghi, 2016; Werkheiser and Noll, 2014).

Lastly, allied to broader postmodern and poststructuralist trends in the social sciences, there is a corpus of geographical food literature reflecting the ‘cultural turn’ to consumption itself. Authors have directed their attention to the sites, practices, identities and meaning of food consumption (Bell and Valentine, 1997; Meah and Watson, 2011; Valentine, 1999; Warde et al., 2007). Lately, literature on consumption has focussed on themes such as embodiment and sensuality in relation to food (DeLind, 2006; Roe, 2006), and the emotionality, physicality and materiality of food (Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy, 2008; 2010; 2013; Mol, 2008). Community Supported Agriculture potentially permits material, embodied engagement with food from seed to fork and promotes re-formation of consumption identities and meanings

through the encouragement of food practices and behaviours predicated on their contrast to mainstream food provisioning. In Chapter 4 I describe different degrees of member engagement in CSA and in Chapter 6 I illustrate the modified consumption practices of CSA.

2.3

Alternative Food Networks

In Chapter 1 I depicted Community Supported Agriculture as a type of Alternative Food Network (AFN). In this following section I describe the heterogeneity of AFNs and interpretive problems of definition arising from their diversity; I then outline three concepts related to AFNs consisting of the *quality turn*, *embeddedness*, and *alternativeness*.

The conventional food system has been remarkably efficient at feeding large proportions of the world's population (Morgan et al., 2006). According to Halweil, '(f)or those who can afford it, the long-distance food system offers unprecedented and unparalleled choice - any food, anytime, anywhere' (2002:6). However, authors such as Patel have critiqued a global food system that paradoxically creates nearly one billion people who are malnourished and another one billion who are overweight (2007), whilst others have highlighted a 'diabesity epidemic' identified with high levels of sugar, salt and fat intake from heavily processed food products (Faraq and Gaballa, 2011). Consequently Lang refers to 'a triple burden of over-, under- and malconsumption, all coexisting, often within the same region and country' (2010b:89).

The conventional food system has also been associated with numerous other negative consequences relating to social injustice (loss of rural livelihoods; low wages; unfair terms of exchange); the natural environment (loss of biodiversity; soil degradation and erosion; water pollution; depletion of water reserves); and climate change (intensive use of oil-dependent fertilisers and pesticides, oil-driven machinery, refrigeration and long-distance transportation) (Allen, 2010; Andreatta et al., 2008; Halweil, 2000; Lang, 2010b; Millstone and Lang, 2008; O'Kane, 2012). The rationalities of the conventional food system have also resulted in consumer anxieties regarding the quality and safety of food following scares related to 'Mad Cow' disease (BSE), *e. coli*, hormones in dairy products, salmonella, avian influenza (Blay-Palmer, 2008; DuPuis, 2000) and, more recently, issues of adulteration and food traceability such as the European Union horsemeat scandal (Gregson and Crang, 2016; O'Mahony, 2013). There have also been broader consumer concerns regarding pesticide residues on foodstuffs (Saba and Messina, 2003) and the genetic modification of plant species for cultivation (Roff, 2007; Schurman and Munro, 2010).

Since the late 1960s a counter-cultural movement has evolved in response to the perceived shortcomings of conventional food systems (Belasco, 1989). Collectively the movement has

been styled Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) (Maye and Kirwan, 2010; Tregear, 2011). AFNs are associated with a turn to quality (Goodman, 2003); Winter maintains that the ‘quality turn’ reflects ‘consumer concerns over human health and food safety, the environmental consequences of globalized and industrialized agriculture, farm animal welfare and fair trade’ (2003b:507); Sonnino and Marsden also cite ‘the culinary and aesthetic value of food’ as an impetus (2006a:183). Sage maintains that the movement represents a turn ‘from value-for-money bargains to *values*-for-money choices’ and, therefore, ‘towards more critical and ethical consumption’ (2010:98, my italics). Consequently Weatherell et al. discern ‘a distinctive set of ‘concerned consumers’’ (2003:233) who Maye et al. assert are, in part, motivated to seek alternatives to the dominance and concentration of food retail in supermarket chains such as Wal-Mart and Tesco (2007). CSA can be regarded as an expression of ‘concerned consumers’ ‘turning to quality’ and seeking to demonstrate values contrary to conventional food systems.

In addition to Community Supported Agriculture, AFNs encompass a plethora of diverse actors and disparate approaches including organic agriculture (Trewavas, 2004; Youngberg and DeMuth, 2013), permaculture (Ingram et al., 2014; Maye, 2016; Mollison, 1988), direct marketing schemes such as Farmers Markets (Archer et al., 2003; Holloway and Kneafsey, 2000; Kirwan, 2004; 2006), Community Gardens (Evers and Hodgson, 2011; Holland, 2004; Okvat and Zautra, 2011), allotments (Corcoran and Kettle, 2015; Farges, 2015; Miller, 2015), seed saving (Pottinger, 2016), Urban Agriculture (Biel, 2016; Dimitri et al., 2016; Hashim, 2015), home or back-yard gardening (Blake and Cloutier-Fisher, 2009; de Hoop and Jehlička, 2017; Schupp and Sharp, 2012), guerilla gardening (Adams et al., 2014; Mudu and Marini, 2016; Thompson, 2015), Food Co-Ops (Pearson et al., 2011; Zitcer, 2015), food banks (Lambie-Mumford, 2013; Tarasuk and Eakin, 2003; Williams et al., 2016), dumpster diving (Eikenberry and Smith, 2005; Vinegar et al., 2016), specific movements such as Fair Trade (Renard, 2003; Vásquez-León, 2010), Slow Food (Lotti, 2010; Miele and Murdoch, 2002) and La Via Campesina (Desmarais, 2007; 2008; Martinez-Torres and Rosset, 2010), and regional and speciality food producers (Holloway, 2002; Levidow and Psarikidou, 2011; Renting et al., 2003).

Consequently, Winter refers to the ‘multifaceted empirical manifestation’ of AFNs (2004:666) and Venn et al. state that ‘an agreed definition of AFNs remains elusive’ (2006:249). In an attempt to rationalise the definitional complexity of AFNs, Venn et al. (ibid) produced a four-part typology: *producers as consumers* (e.g. community gardens); *producer/consumer partnerships* (e.g. CSA); *direct sales* (e.g. Farmers Markets); and *specialist retailers* (e.g. niche farm producers). Furthermore Jarosz proposes four common features of AFNs: proximity of producers and consumers; small-scale operations using sustainable farming methods such as

organic cultivation; food distribution venues such as CSA hubs and Food Co-Ops; and ‘a commitment to the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable food production, distribution and consumption’ (2008:232). Whatmore et al. identify three further principles of AFNs: first, they seek to ‘redistribute value through the network against the logic of bulk commodity production’; secondly, they ‘reconvene "trust" between food producers and consumers’; thirdly, they ‘articulate new forms of political association and market governance’ (2003:389). In my three results chapters I articulate how my CSA case studies corresponded to these AFN criteria. For example, in Chapter 4 I discuss different modes of CSA governance and in Chapter 6 I describe the tension between closer producer/consumer relationships and remote CSA hubs.

David Goodman has made a distinction between European and North American AFNs (2003). In the European setting he depicts a crisis in intensive agrarian productivism that has led to gradual institutional policy responses designed to advance rural (re-)development (Goodman, 2004; Marsden et al., 2000; Renting et al., 2003). Quality food products with regional affiliation have been promoted as a means of ‘adding value’ and sustaining rural livelihoods in agriculture; the movement is characterised by labelling strategies and Quality Assurance Schemes (QAS) typified by the long-established AOC³⁴ in France (Ilbery and Kneafsey, 2000; Morris, 2000; Morris and Young, 2000). According to Cox et al., in these circumstances ‘the “alternative” has generally been regarded as that which can fit into the interstices, or around the margins, of the “mainstream” industrial food supply system as a means for small businesses to survive in an aggressively competitive market’ (2008:205). Winter has argued that the market segmentation of quality food products should be positioned as ‘a continuation and growth of demand for such luxury and positional goods’ constituting a narrow, class-based, niche of consumer preference (2003a:25), whereby distinction ‘is reinvented under the guise of rustic simplicity’ (Paddock, 2015:1).

Conversely, in North America Goodman (2003) associates AFNs with an overtly radical and oppositional stance to industrialised agriculture. The movement is identified with social and environmental justice, new modes of economic exchange, and the socio-political transformative potential of AFNs (Allen et al., 2003; Feenstra, 1997; Hassanein, 2003; Hendrickson and Heffernan, 2002). Therefore, Cox et al. maintain that AFNs in North America relate ‘to a wider sense of protest’ (2008:204) allied to the concept of ‘food sovereignty’ (Ayres and Bosia, 2011; Rosset, 2008). However, it has also been suggested that many of the strategies adopted by North American AFNs replicate and reproduce neoliberal doctrines and subjectivities such as value

³⁴ Appellation d'origine contrôlée (AOC) (controlled designation of origin). Pan-European standards are now known as PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) and PGI (Protected Geographical Indication) schemes

chains, entrepreneurialism, and individual consumer choice that they seek to replace (Guthman, 2008c; Roff, 2007). Alternatively, Harris (2009) has critiqued these scholars for applying a neoliberal analysis to AFNs and draws on the work of Gibson-Graham (2006) to argue that it is necessary to ‘read for difference’ to identify new ‘openings’ in AFN practices such as CSAs.

The two AFN categories that Goodman (2003) proposes are not mutually exclusive but represent two broad approaches. For example, Ilbery et al. (2005) made a comparative study of QAS in Europe and North America (although the authors state that the North American schemes had more radical origins) and there are examples of individual ‘progressive’ food projects in Europe (Maye et al., 2007). Cox et al. maintain that, despite their different origins and emphases, the European and North American movements both constitute ‘a politically weighted practice’ (2008:205). However, Watts et al. have argued that ‘AFNs can be classified as *weaker* or *stronger* on the basis of their engagement with, and potential for subordination by, conventional FSCs³⁵ operating in a globalizing, neoliberal polity’ (2005:34). They contend that the European turn to quality and its emphasis on speciality food products and *terroir* can be conceived of as a weaker alternative ‘because they emphasize the foods concerned, *not the networks* through which they circulate’ (ibid:30, my italics). Follett also argues that AFNs are becoming more nuanced in North America as the movement bifurcates into weaker corporate translations and stronger locally embedded projects contingent with Goodman’s original assessment (2009). DeLind uses the term ‘warrior work’ to distinguish North American AFNs that are overtly political from those more focussed on lifestyle consumption choices that she styles ‘builder work’ (2003). In Chapter 5 I describe tensions that arise at my case studies between progressive (*stronger*) and neoliberal (*weaker*) compulsions within CSA.

By contrast, Wilson maintains that weaker and stronger alternatives are unhelpful totalising dualities that do not reflect the reality of AFN practices (2013). Following Pickerill and Chatterton (2006), Wilson adopts a poststructuralist political economy perspective and proposes the concept of ‘autonomous food spaces’ to envisage new forms of resistance to the dominant capitalist, neoliberal market economy within which conventional food systems are currently organised (2013). Mobilising the concept of diverse economies (Gibson-Graham, 1996), Wilson states that ‘(a) critique of capitalism or an anti-capitalist stance does not mean that autonomous food spaces have rid themselves of the vestiges of capitalism, but rather that they have a commitment to dis-engage from these systems and ways of being *to imagine and create new social and economic realities*’ (ibid:728, my italics); Wilson asserts that ‘a lens of autonomy looks for the potential to forge new relationships and collective identities beyond the typical categories under capitalism of workers, producer, consumer and owner’ (ibid:729). Wilson

³⁵ Food supply chains

contends that the process will be always partial, transitional and incomplete. In Chapter 6 I describe how CSA members at my case studies negotiated these new hybrid identities.

DuPuis and Goodman argue that ‘global industrial agriculture has succeeded through the creation of a systemic ‘placelessness’ (2005:360). O’Hara and Stagl depict an increasing ‘independence from space and time’ as the ‘norms of efficiency, rationality, optimizing and ‘time saving’ behavior’ of the conventional food system dis-embed, or “lift out”, market processes from their local contexts and social relations (2001:540; Giddens, 1990). By contrast, AFNs have been credited with re-embedding economies in their local communities and environments (Granovetter, 1985; Seyfang, 2006). Consequently, in the context of south-west Ireland, Sage has argued that ‘social embeddedness and relations of regard underpin the existence of an alternative good food network’ (2003:58) and Schermer has described Community Supported Agriculture as a transition from “‘Food from Nowhere” to “‘Food from Here” (2015). However, Winter has argued that all market transactions are socially embedded and cautions against conflating “‘alternativeness’ with embeddedness in a deterministic manner’ (2003a:25). Hinrichs, drawing on the work of Block (1990), has posited that AFNs operate according to varying degrees of *marketness* and *instrumentalism* and, therefore, states that ‘(e)mbeddedness should not be seen simply as the friendly antithesis of the market’ (2000:296). In Chapter 5 I explore how each of the CSAs negotiated marketness and instrumentalism in the context of social embeddedness.

A corollary to the concept of embeddedness is food localization; Lapping asserts that CSAs are essentially local in their structure and operation (2004). Pratt contends that ‘(c)oncern with the local is a central theme in many alternative food movements’ (2007:288) and Sonnino and Griggs-Trevarthen maintain that a ‘unifying feature is a strong focus on local food as a means to deliver social, economic and environmental benefits for local communities’ (2013:278). The definition and merits of local food have been subject to considerable academic research as well as controversy (Blake et al., 2010; Carroll and Fahy, 2014; Edwards-Jones et al., 2008; Jones et al., 2004; Pretty et al., 2005; Wallgren, 2006) although Ostrom claims that, however conceptually contested, the notion of local food has resonance with consumers (2006). In Chapter 4 I examine the concept of localism and its relationship to Community Supported Agriculture.

In respect of AFNs, Dupuis and Goodman state that ‘the “‘Local” becomes the context in which this type of action works’ and ‘a place where “‘embeddedness” can and does happen’ (2005:359). DeLind states that ‘(m)uch is being made of local food. It is at once a social movement, a diet, and an economic strategy - a popular solution - to a global food system in great distress’ (2011:273). Mount concurs: ‘(t)he buzz over local food has reverberated across

the developed world, and has produced a cacophony of newsletters, blogs and media stories; and spawned multiple foodie bestsellers, big-budget films, an iPhone “app” for locavores, and even gardens at Buckingham Palace, and on the White House lawn’ (2012:107). Kloppenburg et al. developed the concept of ‘local foodsheds’ to encapsulate the social, environmental and economic benefits of a bounded sustainable locality of food production, distribution and consumption: ‘(t)he foodshed can provide a place for us to ground ourselves in the biological and social realities of living on the land and from the land in a place that we can call home, a place to which we are or can become native’ (1996:41). CSA can be recognized as an element of a local foodshed; several studies have mapped the feasibility of foodsheds at different scales as a tool for re-embedding agriculture, cutting greenhouse gas emissions, and reducing long-distance transportation of food (Galzki et al., 2015; Griffin et al., 2015; Horst and Gaolach, 2014; Peters et al., 2009a&b).

However, the concept of a homogenous and bounded notion of local has been subject to extensive critique; Guthman has regarded a tendency within AFNs to ‘romanticize the local as resistance’ (2008c:1171) whilst Winter has argued that the local food movement can be conservative and exclusionary leading to a form of ‘defensive localism’ (2003a). Long and Murray have proposed a distinction between ‘Global Localists’ who combine support for local and global ethical economies, and ‘Food Patriots’ who prioritise provincial concerns (2013). Holloway and Kneafsey observed facets of localism in their study of a UK Farmers Market that could be interpreted as both ‘alternative’ and ‘reactionary’ (2000) whilst Kloppenburg et al. assert that foodsheds should not be regarded as ‘isolated, parochial entities’ and that the implicit self-reliance of the concept ‘does not deny the desirability or necessity of external trade relationships’ (1996:38).

Goodman has argued that food localization has been unduly reified in AFN literature and that the local has been conceptualised ‘as a spatial configuration that is ontologically given’ (2004:5). However, in their seminal paper “Avoiding the Local Trap”, urban planners Branden Born and Mark Purcell (2006) maintain that there is nothing inherently progressive, sustainable, or just concerning local as a scale; rather, the outcomes of AFNs ‘depend on the actors and agendas that are *empowered* by the particular social relations in a given food system’ (ibid:196, my italics). They argue that it is the *political* agenda set by *social* actors rather than scale, per se, that is responsible for the integral qualities of AFNs. Therefore Wald and Hill contend that ‘(t)he scale at which the politics of food occurs is not inherently fixed but is rather the consequence of a contingent set of scalar relations’ (2016:211). Hinrichs has advanced the concept of ‘diversity-receptive localization’ to indicate a more inclusive and reflexive localism that ‘recognizes variation and difference both within and outside of the spatial local’ and ‘sees

the local embedded within a larger national or world community, recognizing that the content and interests of “local” are relational and open to change’ (2003:37). Hinrichs argues that ‘defensive’ and ‘diversity-receptive’ localisms reside together along a continuum in any given locality. In Chapter 4 I describe extended networks of CSA that demonstrate ‘Global Localist’ and ‘diversity-receptive’ characteristics.

Dupuis and Goodman have stated that ‘the politics of localism can be problematic and contradictory’ (2005:362): ‘who gets to define “the local”?’ and ‘(w)hat kind of society is the local embedded in?’ (ibid:361). Consequently AFNs have been critiqued for their social exclusivity; Guthman has referred to organic salad bags in California as ‘yuppie chow’ (2003). Macias claims that AFNs tend to be populated by ‘a small group of people who, however well-intentioned, currently have a rather predictable profile with regard to race, social class, and educational background’ (2008:1099). Therefore Slocum maintains that ‘(w)hiteness is an organizing feature of alternative food practices’ (2007:531) and Zitcer depicts ‘a white cultural landscape’ (2015:12). Furthermore, Freidberg states that little research has addressed those who are currently absent from AFNs (2010). In Chapter 4 I describe the narrow social composition of my case studies and strategies that were implemented in an attempt to overcome this bias. AFNs have also been identified as gendered spaces; it has been argued that the additional responsibility and practices of AFN participation fall disproportionately on women in the sphere of the home (Guthman, 2002; Little et al., 2009; McIntyre and Rondeau, 2011; Szabo, 2011). However, it has also been observed that women are over-represented as farmers in organic and CSA operations (Jarosz, 2011; Stevenson and Hendrickson, 2004; Tegtmeier and Duffy, 2005; Trauger et al., 2010); Wells and Gradwell have argued that Community Supported Agriculture can be regarded as a gendered practice of caring for local communities and the natural environment (2001).

Recently scholars have challenged the ‘alternativeness’ of AFNs (Whatmore et al., 2003). Holloway et al. assert that ‘the alternative itself is a slippery concept, resisting definition and shifting as soon as attempts are made to tie it down’ (2007b:5), arguing that the distinction between alternative and conventional food networks is ‘conceptually problematic’ (ibid:2). According to Wilson, ‘(t)he concept of alternative is highly ambiguous; it does not give any clear sense of the intentions, perspectives or desires of those involved, other than to suggest they are in opposition to, or distinct from some element of conventional food systems’ (2013:722); Le Velly and Dufeu contend that AFNs comprise ‘a series of variable characteristics that the initiatives achieve to variable extents’ (2016:174). It has been argued, in the context of Farmers Markets, that alterity is a process that is ‘ongoing and contingent’ rather than fixed and oppositional (Kirwan, 2004).

Sonnino and Marsden contend that ‘(r)ather than viewing alternative and conventional food networks as separate spheres, we see them as highly competitive and as *relational* to one another and argue for the need to examine the links more critically’ (2006a:181, my italics). For example, Holloway et al. employed a heuristic device of inter-related analytical ‘fields’ in an attempt to dissolve the conceptual binary of ‘alternative’ and ‘conventional’ food systems amongst case studies including a CSA scheme (2005). According to Holloway et al., ‘the fields allow a ‘mapping’ of a particular food project in relation to a heterogeneous set of inter-related arenas and processes, demonstrating how this mapped arrangement has particular effects’ (ibid:12). Wilson, however, has argued that the analytical fields devised by Holloway et al. placed undue emphasis on production permitting no consideration of the agency of consumption (2013).

Many studies, such as Sonnino and Marsden’s study of south-west England food providers, have confirmed that AFNs simultaneously occupy mainstream marketing spaces alongside niche outlets such as farm shops (2006b); James observed that small-scale farms near Sydney rely on mainstream retailers as well as Farmers Markets to sell their produce (2016). Murdoch et al. describe a Welsh dairy producer who integrated a local yoghurt product into supply chains across the UK; the authors reflect that ‘this forces quality food chains to combine embeddedness and disembeddedness *in rather complicated ways*’ (2000:119, my italics). In Austria Milestad et al. observed that ‘locally orientated businesses used both ‘local’ and ‘global’ market channels and some of them produced both organically and conventionally’ (2010:238). Maye and Ilbery found that small-scale ‘specialist’ food producers on the Scottish/English borders dipped in and out of mainstream food supply chains describing AFNs as ‘‘niche spaces’ *within* the overall food system’ (2006:338, original italics). Ilbery and Maye also identified AFNs sourcing from ‘upstream’ conventional food producers in the same geographical area (2005a); consequently Pratt argues that AFNs ‘spiral in and out of the commodity form’ (2007:297).

Dixon argues that ‘many alternatives are not necessarily anti-capitalist and could not exist outside of a capitalist framework’ (2011:32) whilst Ilbery and Maye maintain that AFNs often depend on mainstream marketing outlets to maintain their economic viability (2005b). Le Velly and Dufeu observed ‘alternative-conventional hybridity’ as fishermen in Nantes used existing food supply chain infrastructure to distribute fish in the novel form of CSA shares (2016:173). Sage has also noted the process of ‘market deepening’ as mainstream food suppliers, such as supermarket chains, increasingly appropriate the marketing and product niches developed by AFNs (2010). Therefore, Sage states that ‘(t)he ‘alternative’ and the mainstream are no longer polar opposites but *coexist within a zone of discursive and material transgression* being

reshaped by a new politics of consumption' (ibid:100, my italics). In Chapter 5 I discuss how CSA shares occupy a hybrid status that continuously circulates between ethical product and retail commodity.

In this second section I referred to the literature of Alternative Food Networks (AFNs). I described the heterogeneity of AFNs and interpretive problems of definition arising from their diversity; I then outlined the related concepts of the *quality turn*, *embeddedness*, and *alternativeness*; their relationship to the concept of Community Supported Agriculture; and to my CSA case studies as I describe them in my subsequent results chapters.

2.4.1

Socio-technical transitions

In the third section of this literature review I theorise Community Supported Agriculture as an 'agent of change' (Stocker and Barnett, 1998). I argue that CSA can be conceptualised as a microlevel niche according to the multi-level perspectives (MLP) of *socio-technical transitions* (Rip and Kemp, 1998). I subsequently situate CSA projects as community-led niche developments with social dimensions that can be regarded as *grassroots innovations* (Seyfang and Smith, 2007). Finally, I argue that CSA can be a means for individuals and communities to achieve *social resilience* (Adger, 2000).

Henderson and Van En have portrayed commitment to Community Supported Agriculture as 'willingness on all sides *to change*: to change how we eat, how we think about food, how we pay for it, how we manage it, and how farms connect with one another' (2007:49, my italics). Hassanein has described AFNs as 'spaces of resistance and creativity in which people themselves attempt to govern and shape their relationships with food and agriculture' (2003:79). Within these 'spaces of action' (Hendrickson and Heffernan, 2002), Hinrichs claims that AFNs 'quietly and modestly remake parts of the food system' (2007:5). Furthermore, Levkoe maintains that 'a transformative food politics uses food as an entry point to address a much broader range of issues and to work towards social change' (2011:700). Firstly, I introduce the multi-level perspective (MLP) model of transition theory to contextualise my central research question concerning the transformative potential of Community Supported Agriculture.

Rip and Kemp have theorised a multi-level perspective of transition as a process of reconfiguration that overcomes inertia and, or, impending crisis in a dominant socio-technical structure (1998). The authors conceptualised three levels of interaction in transitions (*see figure 3*): the macrolevel of the socio-technical *landscape*, the mezzolevel *regime*, and the microlevel *niche* (ibid). Simultaneously, changes at the landscape, or macrolevel, such as oil scarcity or

population growth, create pressure on the regime that becomes more susceptible to innovation (Geels and Schot, 2007). These innovations are either incorporated into the mezzolevel of socio-technical regimes and ‘catch on, get copied, become adapted and spread’ (Seyfang and Smith, 2007:589), or they are rejected and fail (Seyfang and Haxeltine, 2010). Ultimately, reconfigured regimes, such as food supply chains, have the potential to re-shape the macrolevel landscape consisting, for example, of agriculture, environmental stewardship, and public health and nutrition (Genus and Coles, 2008; Smith et al., 2005; Wiskerke, 2003).

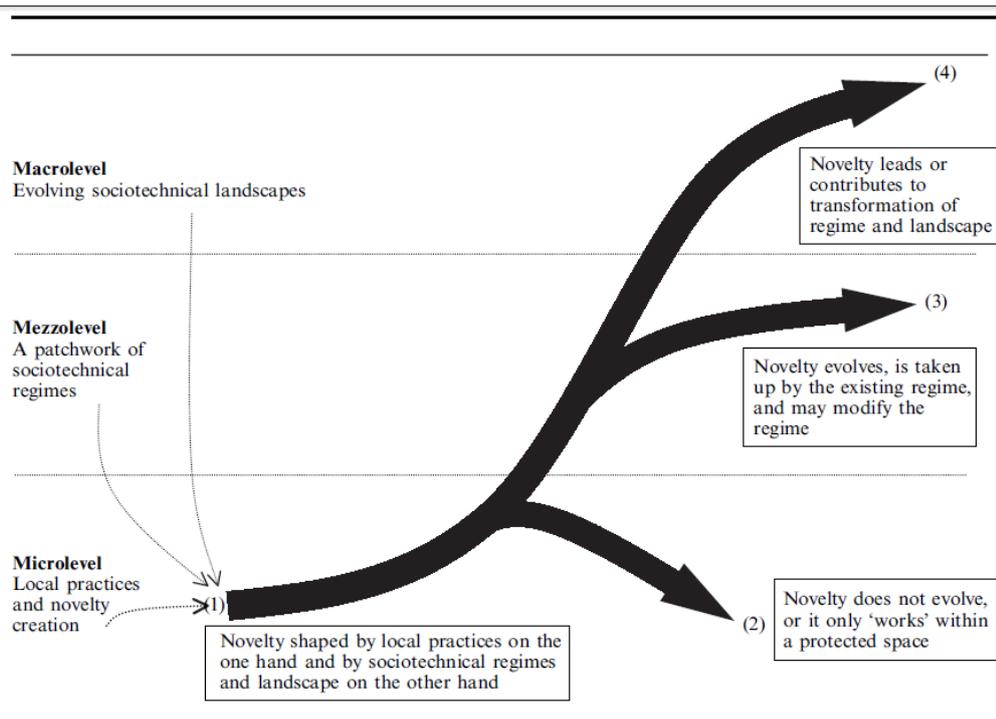


Figure 3 The multilevel dynamics of novelty creation, regime shifts, and landscape transformation

Source: Wiskerke, 2003:432, orig. Rip and Kemp, 1998

According to Seyfang and Smith, a regime consists of ‘entrenched cognitive, social, economic, institutional and technological processes’ comprised of a ‘complex configuration of artefacts, institutions, and agents reproducing technological practices’ (2007:588). However, Wiskerke qualifies regimes as a ‘semicoherent configuration’, the coherence being achieved ‘mainly through mutual adjustments’ between components of the regime (2003:431). Transitions occur as regimes become unstable; this can either result from landscape pressures at the macrolevel, including climate change, armed conflict, or geo-political “shocks” such as oil scarcity; or unsustainable contradictions, or ‘bottlenecks’, within the regime at the mezzolevel such as growing environmental awareness within society (Smith, 2007; van Gameren et al., 2014).

For example, Geels depicted steamships during the 19th Century as a form of technological *niche* that gradually reconfigured the sailing boat *regime* due to pressure from the *landscape* of

the global transportation infrastructure (2002). More recently, solar panels in conjunction with regulatory concessions of feed-in tariff subsidies (FITs) have created a niche to challenge the existing carbon-based regime of energy generation within the unsustainable landscape of climate change (Haas et al., 2011). Geels draws a distinction between ‘purposive’ forms of niche that address specific issues of sustainability such as low-carbon technologies like solar panels, in contrast to ‘emergent’ niches such as the slow evolution of steamships (2011). In the context of the MLP model, local practices such as CSAs express novel ‘emergent’ niche responses at the microlevel to perceived problems within the dominant mezzolevel (food) system (Middlemiss and Parrish, 2010).

Brunori et al. have argued that CSAs represent *microlevel* innovations that have emerged as one strand of ‘post-organic movements’ (2011); the authors maintain that radical aspects of the original organic movement have been absorbed and adapted (“conventionalized”) within the *mezzolevel* food regime prompting a fresh wave of food system novelty, including CSAs [ibid]. Brunori et al. claim that individual CSA schemes comprise singular innovations with the potential to consolidate into a *microlevel* niche agriculture that can contribute to sustainability transitions. The exogenous pressures on a regime makes it more susceptible, and receptive, to the development of innovations, or niches (Geels and Schot, 2007). According to Marsden, ‘(t)he rules, values and assumptions of the old system become increasingly incongruent with new sets of expectations (from below) and the more uncontrollable landscape pressures (from above)’ (2013:124). Folke states that ‘complex systems “stutter” or exhibit increased variance at multiple scales in advance of a regime shift’ (2006:262); the process is open-ended and contested as novel approaches struggle to become established at a broader scale within incumbent structures (Smith, 2006). van Gasteren et al. characterise innovative niches such as CSAs as ‘incubation rooms where alternative arrangements can be created and tested, and where collective learning processes are supported by ad hoc formal or informal social networks’ (2014:3).

Geels and Schot observe that ‘(n)iche-innovations are carried and developed by small networks of dedicated actors, *often outsiders or fringe actors*’ (2007:400, my italics). In Chapter 4 I depict the small group of individuals who were responsible for the inception of each of my case study CSAs and in Chapter 6 I describe the pressures participants experienced due to their limited numbers and skills. Seyfang and Smith argue that innovations require ‘pragmatic, intermediary initiatives’ to catalyse transitions: ‘(e)copreneurs and intermediary organisations more attuned to market and commercial imperatives assist this bridging activity’ (2007). White and Stirling examined two CSAs in south-east England as part of a larger sample of grassroots initiatives that are building pathways towards sustainability (2013); the authors emphasise the

importance of intermediary organisations such as the Soil Association (and the funding streams they administer) as a means of integrating innovative niches into existing food regimes. However, Seyfang and Smith (2007) contend that niche integration is a process of mutual constitution between the niche and the regime that can compromise the distinctive characteristics of the niche and Boyer states that '(i)ntermediacy is also a *costly* status' due to the compromises that are necessitated (2015:334, original italics).

Smith describes how organic agriculture has undergone translation as it has been absorbed and transformed by the mainstream food regime (2006). However, the process of innovation is continuous as successive rounds of niches emerge; Bailey and Wilson portray 'ongoing processes of change between competing states within a spectrum of decision-making boundaries that shift continually over time' (2009:2327). Thus Smith describes AFNs as a niche response to the mainstreaming of organic agriculture; the original niche innovation fragments and re-generates into new forms, including CSAs (2006). However, Smith argues that demand for organic and local produce is, in part, driven by its visibility in conventional supermarkets. Therefore he claims that 'the relationship between niche and mainstream is dialectic. Developments in each will be carried out with reference to the other' (ibid:456).

According to Haxeltine and Seyfang, niches can either be *replicated* (copied in the same form); *scaled-up* (increased in proportion in the same location)³⁶; or make a *niche to regime transition* (translated into a mainstream form) (2009). Kneafsey et al. have argued that AFNs such as CSAs 'do not necessarily want to develop by growing bigger... this would damage the ethos of the scheme and undermine the sense of 'connection' which has been established between producer and consumers' (2006:4). Furthermore, Smith states that translation 'blunts the scope for niches to be radically innovative' (2006:439). Schlicht et al. reviewed the role of intermediaries for European CSAs such as funding bodies and concluded that autonomy was an important feature of individual schemes: 'politics should not have a strong influence on the farmers and consumers' (n.d.:63). In addition, Lizio and Lass discovered that there were diseconomies of scale for CSAs that got larger: 'growth of the CSA... had a negative effect on CSA profit level' (2005:13). Galt et al. have also demonstrated that as the concentration and scale of CSAs in California has grown, they necessarily compete with each other and become less or un-profitable (2016).

Mount et al. claim that 'alternative local food initiatives may be too numerous, too diverse, too isolated, too narrow and too small for the project of "scaling up" local and regional food systems' (2013:594). Furthermore, Farnsworth et al. maintain that the features of Community

³⁶ Stroud Community Agriculture (SCA), currently the largest CSA operation in the UK, has just over 200 members; I observed CSA schemes in North America that had in excess of 1500 members

Supported Agriculture including '(i)ts emphasis on social objectives, its inability to supply food year around, and the ongoing development of size-neutral organic technologies... will probably keep it from becoming a major market channel in the next century' (1996:90). Consequently, in terms of *niche* transitions, replication is most likely to retain the founding characteristics of CSA and be more economically viable than scaling-up. In Chapter 4 I describe how geographically-extended CSA networks encourage the replication of CSA within and across state boundaries; in Chapter 5 I discuss how, in a process of translation, CSA projects are increasingly adopting instrumental practices that resemble mainstream agricultural operations.

The MLP approach to socio-technical transitions has been critiqued on account of its emphasis on technological innovations and its prioritization of markets and the state in creating the conditions for change (White and Stirling, 2013); Hinrichs has stated that the MLP model 'can seem mechanistic and over-determined' (2014:149). Smith has also argued that the heuristic device of segmented levels obfuscates and disguises the complexity of real conditions: 'in practice niche-regime distinctions are rarely so clear cut' (2007:447) and Lovell refers to 'the messiness of socio-technical system change' (2007:42). It has also been argued that the theorisation of MLP elides and neglects the politics and contestability of socio-technical transitions (Hinrichs, 2014; Shove and Walker, 2007; Smith et al., 2005). Therefore, Coenen et al. maintain that the model 'overlooks the advantages, conflicts and tensions which arise in the wider networks of actors and institutions within which transition processes are embedded' (2012:976). Furthermore, Lawhon and Murphy argue that it 'generally privilege(s) the perspectives of corporate leaders, innovators, scientists, and state agents, thus excluding other relevant actors such as consumers, activists, and workers' (2012:361). Lovell also has suggested that the MLP model under-theorises the role of communities, and the interactions between them, in shaping the emergence and function of niche innovations (2015).

2.4.2

Grassroots innovations

In order to address the absence of communities and human agency in the MLP theorisation of transitions, Seyfang and Smith have proposed a model of *grassroots innovations* that extends the MLP model into civic society (2007). Grassroots innovations are an effective mode of analysis for CSAs because the concept addresses the *social* dimensions of transition; Seyfang and Smith describe grassroots innovations as 'networks of activists and organisations that lead bottom-up solutions for sustainable development; solutions that respond to the local situation and the interests and values of the communities involved' (ibid:585). In contrast to the technological focus of MLP, Seyfang and Smith's conceptualization of grassroots innovations predominantly emphasises community-led innovations (Seyfang and Haxeltine, 2012). White

and Stirling argue that grassroots innovations are an important focus of research because they illustrate models of sustainable lifestyles that ‘might inform or integrate with mainstream ways’ (2013).

In contrast with technological innovations that seek to overcome well-defined technical obstacles, Seyfang and Smith contend that grassroots innovations address broader ‘problem framings’, such as mobility, food and energy services (2007). Lovell describes the re-orientation of socio-technical transitions towards communities as a ‘turn in MLP scholarship’ that integrates socio-technical niches into specific localities that can be regarded as a form of social movement (2015). Cameron and Hicks studied a volunteer-run scheme which promoted the diffusion of grid-connected solar panel installations in Newcastle, Australia; the authors maintain that ‘(i)mpact can be achieved through an accumulation of small initiatives’ (2014:62). CSAs also represent a community-led collection of small initiatives that demonstrate the potential to inform and transform dominant socio-technical regimes. Kirwan et al. make a contrast between specific *intrinsic* benefits of grassroots innovations, such as access to fresh organic vegetables, and *extrinsic* benefits such as ‘the development of raised levels of awareness, empowerment and capacity building’ (2013:832). The authors claim that grassroots innovations have the potential to ‘make a contribution to more profound ‘paradigm change’ within society’ (ibid).

Seyfang and Smith argue that grassroots innovations can either be a response to the failure of the market to meet social needs, or they reflect an ideological commitment ‘to alternative ways of doing things’ (2007: 592). According to Haxeltine and Seyfang, grassroots innovations create ‘space for the development of new ideas and practices, for experimenting with new systems of provision, and for enabling people to express their ‘alternative’ green and socially progressive values’ (2009:3). In Chapter 4 I describe how members of my two case studies use their participation in the CSAs to express and enact specific values and beliefs. Boyer has argued that sustainable transitions are ‘unlikely to emerge fortuitously in the global marketplace, but may emerge from *community-based* activities that create an *ideological* space for experimentation with alternative systems of production and consumption’ (2015:320, my italics). Scott-Cato and Hillier maintain that activists do not perceive the market economy as a solution to issues of sustainability such as climate change (2010). In contrast, the authors argue that grassroots innovations comprise a form of ‘liberated political action’ that seeks to ‘solve political problems by micropolitical community processes, rather than via normal, macropolitical channels’ (ibid:879). Seyfang and Smith also argue that grassroots innovations have more distinctive potential to deliver sustainability benefits than top-down initiatives ‘because community action utilises contextualised knowledge and implies a better ‘fit’ of solution’ (2007:593).

However, Seyfang and Smith observe that community-led grassroots innovations such as CSAs depend on a fragile resource base, particularly volunteer labour and piecemeal sources of grant funding (ibid). Therefore the authors argue that grassroots innovations ‘spend 90% of their time simply surviving, and only 10% developing the activity’ (ibid:596) and Boyer states that they are ‘relatively vulnerable to forces outside their own control’ (2015:321). In Chapter 6 I outline the difficulties encountered by the executive bodies of each of my case studies as they sought to develop the CSA schemes in their first years of operation. Smith has also argued that, by definition, grassroots innovations have limited potential to diffuse into existing regimes: ‘they cannot embody the green context that produced them too strongly (i.e. underpinning values and performance criteria) since this would limit their interpretative and practical flexibility’ (2007:446). By contrast, White and Stirling argue that *technological* socio-technical niches, such as solar panels, are more likely to translate into existing regimes because they share the same codified and structured institutional settings, regulatory environment and markets (2013).

Boyer states that the ‘grassroots innovation literature offers few empirical accounts of the specific spaces and circumstances in which niche-to-regime translation takes place’ (2015:323). Kirwan et al. examined 29 local food projects funded by the Big Lottery Local Food programme and stated that it was ‘not possible to discern any wider diffusion of the social innovation that has been developed at an individual project level’ (2013:837). The authors argued that achievements were uncoordinated and that a general lack of recognition impaired the ability of grassroots innovations to influence dominant regimes. Seyfang and Smith contend that grassroots innovations also suffer from ‘risk aversion’; they argue that ‘policy culture is insufficiently mature’ to accept the experimental nature of grassroots innovations (2007:597). Seyfang and Smith also observe that grassroots innovations exhibit their own traits of social exclusion: ‘(m)uch work needs to be done regarding ‘whose’ alternative values are being mobilised in niches’ (ibid:599). In Chapter 4 I depict the narrow social composition of the communities that comprised my case studies.

2.4.3

Social resilience

CSAs have been conceptualised as a means of increasing resilience in local communities. In this section of the chapter I mobilise the concept of social resilience to demonstrate how local communities are utilising Community Supported Agriculture as a means to improve resilience at place-based initiatives.

The concept of resilience is rooted in the natural science of systems ecology; Holling employed the term to evaluate the ability of complex inter-linked eco-systems ‘to absorb change and

disturbance and still maintain the same relationships between populations or state variables’ (1973:14). However, social scientists have subsequently applied the concept of resilience to the interdependence of society and nature (Adger, 2000), and especially how communities respond and cope with environmental risk and natural disasters (Adger et al., 2005; Gunderson, 2010). Consequently Hudson defines resilience as ‘the capacity of ecosystems, individuals, organisations or materials to cope with disruption and stress and retain or subsequently regain functional capacity and form’ (2010:12) and Folke refers to resilience as a function of co-evolving *social–ecological* systems (2006).

Skerratt maintains that the concept of resilience is ‘increasingly-ubiquitous’ (2013:45) and Haxeltine and Seyfang state that ‘(t)he term resilience has a wide range of different uses in different disciplines and areas of political and economic life’ (2009:4). Scott argues that ‘its application across a range of social science disciplines (and its translation from ecology) also points to its emergence as a *fuzzy* or *elastic* concept’ (2013:599, my italics). Brand and Jax assert that the term resilience is so widely utilised that ‘conceptual clarity and practical relevance are critically in danger’ (2007:1). However, Buikstra et al. claim that ‘the notion of overcoming adversity’ is common to most definitions of resilience (2010:976).

Weichselgartner and Kelman argue that resilience has broadened ‘from a descriptive concept to a normative agenda’ (2015:249). Christopherson et al. identify ‘a generalized contemporary sense of uncertainty and insecurity’ and assert that the ‘intersection of an economic crisis and an environmental crisis has enhanced the perceived sense of vulnerability and, hence, stimulated the search for new paths to ‘resilience’ (2010:3), of which Community Supported Agriculture can be regarded as one avenue. Barr and Devine-Wright contend that the concept of resilience is increasingly employed in the context of developed nations (2012) and diverse authors have reviewed its application in urban (Gleeson, 2008; Unsworth et al., 2011) and rural contexts (McManus et al., 2012; Scott, 2013). Weichselgartner and Kelman assert that ‘‘resilience’ has been replacing ‘vulnerability’ and ‘sustainability’ as a currency in academic and policy discourses’ (2015:249) and Evans claims that the concept of resilience ‘seems ideally suited to the challenges of surviving in a world in which ‘substantial and novel’ impacts on the biosphere will take humanity into largely uncharted territory’ (2011:223).

According to Haxeltine and Seyfang, ‘the resilience approach has traditionally focused on the ability of a system *to maintain its structure and function* in the face of disturbance’ (2009:5, my italics). However, Manyena et al. argue that ‘resilience should be viewed as the ability to “bounce forward” and “move on” (2011:417). Scott describes this as an *evolutionary* approach to resilience ‘characterised by an emphasis on adaptive capacity and transformation’ (2013:597). According to Shaw and Theobald, ‘(c)onceptualising resilience as transformation

recognises that action is less about returning to the status quo and more about *radical change*' (2011:7, my italics). The authors argue the evolutionary conception of resilience acknowledges that "shocks", such as climate change or environmental degradation, may imply that a regime in its existing state is untenable and, therefore, an undesirable state to return to.

Maguire and Cartwright argue that construing resilience as transformative, as opposed to restorative, is a means of recognising routine and inevitable shifts, 'rather than seeing change as a 'stressor' from which a community needs to recover to its original state' (2008:5). Skerrat studied community land trusts in Scotland; she argues that '(c)ommunities' aimed-for outcomes are far wider than shock-absorption, and include deliberately building their skills and capacity-base in a context of constant change, rather than in anticipation of singular events' (2013:36). Wilson draws a distinction between resilience as an *outcome*, such as when communities respond to an adverse situation, in contrast to a *process* 'linked to dynamic changes over time associated with community learning and the willingness of communities to take responsibility and control' of their future development (2010:366). According to Colussi, '(a) resilient community is one that takes intentional action to enhance the personal and collective capacity of its citizens and institutions to respond to, and influence the course of social and economic change' (2000:5). Both of my case studies can be situated as community interventions to enhance resilience, or "bounce forward", in the context of climate change; in Chapter 3 I describe the social and political groupings that preceded and presaged the formation of the CSAs.

Norris et al. argue that 'resilience is not an immutable characteristic that a community has or does not have but is instead a *process* that emerges from malleable resources' (2008:146, my italics). Sonnino and Griggs-Trevarthen describe these resources as a combination of 'people, places, tools, skills and knowledge' (2013:272). King maintains that local food projects, such as Farmers Markets and CSAs, contribute to the resilience of communities through processes of 'relationship building, genuine participation, inclusiveness, resource mobilization and creating space for knowledge sharing' (2008:111). Maguire and Cartwright contend that '*(s)ocial resilience* recognises the powerful capacity of people to learn from their experiences and to consciously incorporate this learning into their interactions with the social and physical environment' (2008:5, my italics). Resilience can be regarded as an ongoing social process of adaptability that can lead to transformation 'and cross thresholds into a new development trajectory' (Folke et al., 2010). Therefore *social resilience* is a component of community-led *grassroots innovations* comprising microlevel niches that can lead to *socio-technical transitions*.

According to Barr and Devine-Wright, 'pathways to resilience are being shaped through the evolving discourse of transition' and a focus on specific localities (2012:526). Characteristic of this trend is the growth of Transition Town initiatives (Hopkins, 2008) that were pioneered in the Republic of Ireland in 2005 and have now spread globally (Bailey et al., 2010; Connors and McDonald, 2011; Mason and Whitehead, 2009). These studies are located within a broader literature regarding sustainable communities (Blay-Palmer, 2011; Dale and Newman, 2006; Marsden et al., 2010) and community self-organisation (Gilchrist, 2000, Uitermark, 2015). Inspired by the tenets of permaculture, the Transition movement is 'a response to negative future effects of peak oil and climate change, and seeks to facilitate "energy descent" in communities through a wide range of activities' (Barr and Devine-Wright, 2012:52). Graugaard asserts that 'the idea of resilience guides both the theoretical outlook and practical projects of the Transition movement' (2012:246). For example, one of my case study CSAs developed directly from a Transition Town initiative and can be regarded as an example of how 'resilient pathways are implemented 'on the ground'' (Wilson, 2012:1218). Conversely, some authors have argued that Transition Town initiatives do not challenge the underlying structures and dynamics of power that create and maintain unsustainable regimes and are socially exclusive (Chatterton and Cutler 2008; Kenis and Mathijs, 2014; Mason and Whitehead, 2012). Furthermore, Aiken argues that Transition Town initiatives reflect a 'civic core' in communities that tend to be represented by those that are 'middle-aged, well educated and live in prosperous areas' (2012:96). In Chapter 4 I describe strategies undertaken by my case studies to extend this 'civic core' of participants to other sections of community.

The concept of resilience has, in general, been critiqued for its lack of analysis of power relations (Hudson, 2010). Weichselgartner and Kelman argue that resilience has often been imposed as a 'technical-reductionist framework' that ignores and obscures asymmetrical social relationships; the authors call for a 'critical resilience thinking through locality and marginality' (2015:263). Hudson claims that resilience should be examined in terms of 'who has the power to determine what is acceptable, to whom, and via what political process' (2010:13). Franklin et al. have referred to 'social geographies of resilience' to describe how the rhetoric and practice of resilience can be exclusive, illustrated by their study of Stroudco food coop in Stroud (2011:771). Scott has also argued that the concept of resilience can be mobilised to support competing policy agendas that can be either progressive or reactionary (2013:599). Evans maintains that resilience has become a normative 'pseudo-scientific policy discourse' that assimilates economic and environmental crises (2011:224); he argues that it disguises and stifles political debate regarding the underlying explanations of constant adaptation, such as inherently unstable capitalist structures. Wilson has also observed that the concept of resilience has been more generally applied to single events and natural disasters rather than 'slow-onset hazards'

such as human-induced climate change, even though ‘anthropogenic drivers have led to the destruction of many more communities than natural catastrophes’ (2012:1219).

In the preceding section of this chapter I have described Community Supported Agriculture in relation to three theoretical approaches to change: *socio-technical transitions*; *grassroots innovations*; and *social resilience*. I began by mobilising the multi-level perspective (MLP) model of transition theory to contextualise my central research question concerning the transformative potential of Community Supported Agriculture (Rip and Kemp, 1998); I argued that CSA can be theorised as a microlevel niche that has the potential to remodel unsustainable mezzolevel food supply regimes. I subsequently situated CSA projects as community-led developments with social dimensions that can be regarded as *grassroots innovations* (Seyfang and Smith, 2007). Finally, I argued that socially embedded Community Supported Agriculture can be a conduit for communities to attain place-based *social resilience* (Adger, 2000). In this thesis I will apply this definition of resilience embedded within a community to consider the transformative potential of my case studies.

2.5

Community Supported Agriculture

In the following chapter I describe my application of Strauss and Corbin’s interpretation of Grounded Theory (1990) whereby I initially reviewed literature on CSAs and identified dominant themes during the course of my empirical fieldwork. In an iterative process combining data with theory, I returned to the literature to develop these themes into the organising principles of my three results chapters: *Community and Social Capital*; *Moral Economy*; and *Viability, Capacity and Sacrifice*. In this section of the literature review I describe academic research on CSAs emanating predominantly from North America that intersects with my dominant themes. I mobilise this literature to identify research lacunae that my thesis addresses, relating to these dominant themes, and in the context of CSA in the UK. I begin by describing the limited literature pertaining to CSA in the UK before proceeding to review the more extensive literature concerning CSA that originates from North America.

Although the first CSA was established in the UK less than 10 years (1994) after the first CSA in North America (1986), there is an extremely narrow literature relating to UK Community Supported Agriculture. The Soil Association has published the largest volume of material, mostly in the form of guidance and information for potential CSA projects (Soil Association, n.d.,a&b; 2005; 2011:a,b&c; 2012), and also commissioned an evaluation of CSA in the UK (Saltmarsh et al., 2011). Keech et al., in collaboration with the Soil Association, produced an analysis of seven UK CSAs in order to establish their characteristics; the authors state that

‘(d)efining community supported agriculture presents some challenges’, but they identify shared risk and financial commitment as the foremost qualities (2009:2). Latterly, academic researchers have also begun to investigate CSAs in the UK drawing on a limited number of case studies in Scotland and England (Charles, 2011; Cox et al., 2008; Holloway et al., 2007b; Ravenscroft et al., 2013; White and Stirling, 2013).

Liz Charles’ paper is chiefly methodological exploring ‘ethical issues encountered when using a participatory action research approach’ (2011:362). In addition, she identifies aspects of the *moral economy of CSA* referring to ‘CSA as an ethical ‘caring practice’’ (ibid:367). Cox et al. (2008) and Holloway et al. (2007b) were part of the same research team that investigated Earthshare, the first CSA in the UK. The paper by Cox et al. examines the two-fold role of communication within the scheme; firstly, as a means of disseminating values between growers and members that are distinctive to the *moral economy of CSA* and, secondly, as a means of sharing information between members that leads to a ‘graduation effect’ of sustainable behaviours beyond the realm of food, thereby indicating the transformative potential of Community Supported Agriculture (2008). As previously mentioned in this review, Holloway et al. deploy Earthshare as one of two case studies to consider the problematic dualism between conventional and alternative food supply chains (2007b). The authors use heuristic fields to describe facets of Earthshare that ‘demonstrate the possibilities for both consumer and producer agency within projects’ to facilitate ‘continual practices of partial resistance’ to the conventional food system (ibid:15). Therefore Holloway et al. also examined the transformative potential of Earthshare.

Ravenscroft et al. researched CSA as a form of ‘leisure-based counter-hegemonic activities’ (2013:629). They argue that individuals volunteer at CSAs to advance their *political* beliefs in a *practical* setting. However, they maintain that the human capital that individuals bring to these projects can be transitory and, therefore, unreliable. Ravenscroft et al. also highlight how CSA dissolves the distinction between farmers and subscribers as members, through their participation, become ‘active co-producers’ in the schemes (ibid). Finally, White and Stirling portray CSAs as grassroots innovations that are ‘a critical arena for exploring trajectories towards Sustainability’ (2013:845). The authors investigate the resilience of a CSA scheme in terms of the human capacity of the membership, financial capital such as funding sources, and the role of intermediary organisations to bring linking capital to the social movement. White and Stirling argue that local food projects, due to their intrinsic lack of capacity, often adopt ‘a fire-fighting mode of operation’ (ibid:842) whereas intermediary organisations can play a critical role in the growth of the movement because they ‘are in a position to recognise more long term transformative trends and so be more adaptively strategic in their approaches’ (ibid:846).

Therefore White and Stirling address the socio-technical landscape that CSA grassroots innovations reside within.

In contrast to the UK, there is an extensive academic literature detailing CSA in North America that derives from different research disciplines such as geography, sociology, anthropology, planning, and economics. In the following section I draw on this CSA literature to describe how it traverses and converges with the dominant themes of my three results chapters.

The concept of community is prevalent in North American literature on CSAs; Hayden and Buck refer to ‘the paragon of community’ as a central tenet of CSA (2012:333) and Fieldhouse asserts that Community Supported Agriculture ‘is more than a simple producer-consumer relationship, but rather *a collective effort* to provide food whilst building community’ (1996:43, my italics). Schnell claims that ‘CSA has become a means of more fully engaging with place and all its complexity, and of creating a sense of belonging to, and responsibility for, it’ (2013:625). However, according to other researchers: ‘all too frequently the ‘community’ never materialises’ (Stagl, 2002:157). Drawing on Putnam’s work on declining civic engagement in North America (2000), Pole and Gray have depicted CSA as ‘farming alone’ (2012). In their study of farms in Central Illinois and New Hampshire, Brehm and Eisenhauer conclude that ‘(t)he importance of community building and development of social capital are not widely considered significant motivators for joining a CSA, nor are they perceived to be particularly important benefits of membership’ (2008:113). Russell and Zepeda studied Troy CSA farm in Wisconsin; they claimed that members comprised a *community of interests*, united by common beliefs rather than face-to-face social relationships: ‘We believe in the CSA. We believe in fresh and organic, *but without actually knowing anybody...*’ (2008:144, my italics).

Many authors have highlighted the social homogeneity of CSA membership, ‘most being middle-class, urban, white, and highly educated’ (Ostrom, 2007:109). Allen and Wilson claim that ‘class and inequality have been invisible in the alternative agrifood movement in the US’ (2008:537). Hinrichs and Kremer observed that the CSA membership in the Midwest of North America ‘was more advantaged in terms of income, occupation and education’ (2002:65) and Perez et al. made similar findings on the Central Coast of North America noting that 90% of CSA members were European-Americans (2003). Guthman refers to ‘color-blind mentalities’ and ‘exclusionary practices’ that ‘instantiate whiteness’ in Community Supported Agriculture (2008a); Allen states that ‘(w)hile CSAs can be wonderful for those who have the time and the cashflow to participate, the idea of CSA seems anachronistic for all but the most privileged’ (1999:25). Macias observes that CSA membership is largely promoted by word-of-mouth, thereby reproducing a socially uniform membership (2008). Furthermore, Hinrichs argues that

the project of food localisation is a defensive patriotic process ‘appealing to narrow nationalist sentiments’ (2003:37) that necessarily defines ‘who is in and who is out’ (Feagan, 2007:29).

Alkon and Agyeman have suggested that small farmers and low-income families are both vulnerable sectors of society that could be of mutual benefit to each other (2011); the authors have argued for a food movement consisting of an inclusive *polyculture* that extends beyond a privileged, middle-class elite. In North America many different strategies have been adopted by CSAs in order to address food structures and practices that are socially exclusive. In North Carolina farmers received payments to subsidise CSA veg-shares to low-income households (Andreatta et al., 2008). Other strategies include: payment plans that allow members to spread the cost of a share across a season instead of a single, up-front subscription; sliding-scale charges according to means; workshares for volunteers; acceptance of state benefits such as food stamp equivalents; more affluent members subsidising less well-off members by making donations or higher payments; and bartering as an alternative to monetary exchange (Burke, 2010; Forbes and Harmon, 2008; Kittredge, 1996; Lass et al., 2003). For example, at the Vegetables Unplugged CSA in Kingston, Ontario, Wilson observed that ‘(a) workshare CSA model opens membership up to a broader spectrum of individuals and provides a way to access what might otherwise be unaffordable local organic produce’ (2013:731). However, Guthman et al. have argued that the state needs to intervene with greater levels of subsidy that are sustained and guaranteed because, within the confines of the market economy, ‘farm security trumps food security’ for low-income families (2006:682). In Chapter 4 I enhance knowledge regarding the manifestation, function and composition of community in Community Supported Agriculture in the UK, and how it contributes to the transformative potential of CSA.

Obach and Tobin have argued that local food initiatives ‘show promise in terms of reestablishing social ties and a sense of community that may reinvigorate civic and *political engagement*’ (2014:308, my italics). Ostrom maintains that Community Supported Agriculture is a means for consumers to engage with the politics of food production: ‘thousands of them are literally chewing on the roots of a new agriculture’ (2007:117). Goland asserts that ‘(f)or some consumers, CSAs represent *an act of rebellion*, an option for withdrawing from the conventional marketplace and for creating a different kind of relationship between themselves and their food, the people who grow it, and the land from which it comes’ (2002:22, my italics). Nost refers to ‘acts of knowing’ (2014:152) to characterise CSA membership that Saldivar-Tanaka and Krasny depict as ‘agricultural literacy’ (2004:400).

It has been argued that Community Supported Agriculture schemes constitute part of a broader social movement allied to sustainable agriculture and food sovereignty (Goodman and DuPuis, 2002; Lang, 2010a). Ravenscroft et al. studied a CSA in south-east England; they contend that

participation in the CSA is a *counter-hegemonic activity* encompassing personal and political transition that its members achieve through the re-constitution of their leisure identities (2013). They argue that consumers usually express their ethical preferences through purchasing decisions whilst Community Supported Agriculture allows individuals to also engage with the *production* of their food. Therefore Jarosz asserts that Community Supported Agriculture comprises ‘the development of a post-capitalist politics that challenges neoliberal subject formation in food production and consumption’ (2011:307). My research adds to the limited literature concerning the potential of Community Supported Agriculture as a social movement in the UK.

There is also considerable literature from North America relating to the distinctive ethics of Community Supported Agriculture. According to Kloppenburg et al., CSA is a form of marketing predicated on values that extend beyond price and quantity (1996); Hudson describes CSA as a new form of economics: ‘as if... people mattered. As if the land mattered. As if food were more than a commodity’ (2005:12). Thompson and Coskuner-Balli depict Community Supported Agriculture as ‘a thriving countervailing market system... which has staked out a viable market niche for small, independent farmers by aggressively *reasserting the countercultural values and ideals* that originally animated the organic food movement’ (2007a:136, my italics). In Scotland, Holloway et al. portray Earthshare CSA as ‘a challenge to the purely money exchanges which are prevalent within capitalist food production–consumption’ (2007b:12) and Schnell argues that Community Supported Agriculture has ‘relegated cost to being but one concern among many in an economic relationship’ (2007:562).

Wells and Gradwell characterise CSA as a caring practice that encompasses local communities, other species and their natural environments (1999). In her study of female CSA farmers in Washington State, Jarosz emphasises the gendered aspect of this caring work (2011). However, she argues that the caring relationship is reciprocal: ‘the farmer herself is also nourished through the social relationship that is created through growing and eating food’ (ibid:315). Dowler et al. describe these forms of interaction as ‘(c)are-full relationships’ that are ‘aware of the needs of close and distant others, human and non-human’ (2010:215). At Twin Creek CSA south of Winnipeg, Fieldhouse observed that ‘people are willing to forego the quest for the cheapest food possible if they perceive that *other values* are being upheld’ (1996:46, my italics). Therefore, Press and Arnould ‘find that CSAs are also places of moral superiority, which they demonstrate by expressing opposition to the industrial food system’ (2011:184). In Chapter 5 I extend the limited discussion of the *moral economy of CSA* in the context of the UK to examine how the values that define and distinguish CSA from other forms of agriculture informs its transformative potential.

According to Galt, ‘(a)cademics have characterized CSA in a number of ways, but most are celebratory’ (2013:343). However, in North America, authors including Feagan and Henderson (2009) have observed that CSAs are increasingly eschewing founding ethical principles such as risk-sharing and commitment and becoming more orientated to market values in order to remain competitive. Allen states that ‘food-system localization efforts, grounded as they are in entrepreneurial modalities and consumer choice, are constrained by economic structures and realities’ (2010:296). Lang has observed that ‘CSA operators are, after all, running small businesses’ (2010a:23) and Hinrichs argues that CSAs constantly negotiate economic and ethical considerations which ‘all jostle side by side’ (2000:296). Galt argues that ‘CSAs do not challenge the structural problems created by the commodification of food... because CSAs do not necessarily challenge a belief in the market as the prime organizing principle for society’ (2011:134). Allen has argued that members who bought a CSA share originally were speculating on their produce, relying on the success of the harvest (1999). Nowadays, Schnell maintains that most CSAs guarantee a fixed quantity of produce, regardless of what is grown on the farm (2007) and, therefore, farmers are progressively internalising the risk of production.

Hayden and Buck claim that the CSA movement in North America has bifurcated: ‘some CSAs have become more strictly market oriented, running the business internally and requiring only payment from members, while others continue to strive for the integrated community vision’ (2012:333). In North America the fissure has occurred along geographical lines: CSA in the eastern states and the Midwest ‘emphasise principles of cooperation and education, in conjunction with concerns about sustainable farm livelihoods and food quality and freshness’, whilst in the far west ‘some CSAs have organized on an increasingly larger scale, offering essentially a subscription farming option, where the "non-economic" features and attractions of CSA are less prominent’ (Hinrichs and Kremer, 2002:71). Consequently Goland argues that the movement is becoming increasingly apolitical: ‘(i)f... CSA must reconfigure itself to more neatly match the expectations derived from the prevailing consumer culture, its power as a change agent is diluted’ (2002:22).

Durrenberger maintains that ‘members assess their membership in terms of whether they receive their money's worth and farmers worry about whether they are giving members their money's worth’ (2002:43). Tegmeier and Duffy observed that CSA farmers in the Midwest of North America set share prices on what they perceive to be their members’ willingness to pay, rather than the market price or their costs of production including labour (2005). Lass et al. argue that ‘CSA farms have the power to price above marginal costs, but for a variety of reasons, they choose to exert very little of that power’ (2005:15); they state that pricing decisions ‘are likely affected by *altruistic feelings* of the farmer towards shareholders’ (ibid). Nost recounts a

subscriber who complained that his lettuce had mouse droppings in it: '(i)n response, the farmer noted that the sharer's expectations had to come first *because they had paid*' (2014:157 my italics). Consequently, Galt et al. assert that the moral economy of Community Supported Agriculture is a 'double-edged sword' (2013). In Chapter 5 I examine the immanent tension between the social and enterprise features of CSA at my UK case studies and consider how this affected their ability to remain resilient.

Financial security is related to the resilience of Community Supported Agriculture and comprises a dominant feature of North American literature on CSA. Thompson and Coskuner-Balli argue that Community Supported Agriculture has arisen as a result of the co-optation of organic agriculture by large commercial enterprises; they claim that CSA is an alternative outlet that provides 'a viable market niche for small, independent farmers' (2007a:136). CSA is a form of direct marketing that allows farmers to maximise their earnings and supply fresh, organic produce to members at affordable prices. According to Hudson, 'CSAs are flexible institutions with the potential to thrive in a wide variety of environments, geographic and socio-economic' (2005:4); they 'promote economic stability... while providing a much needed commodity to area residents' (ibid). The model affords farmers a guaranteed market for their produce and access to a supportive community of subscribers which shares the risks of production. In addition, money is retained and re-circulated in the local economy (Andreatta et al., 2008; Cooley and Lass, 1998; Guthman et al., 2006; Hudson, 2005).

However Perry and Franzblau have observed that '(t)he question for CSA farmers is not *how do I get one started*, but *how do I keep it going?*' (2010:i, original italics). Seyfang and Smith argue that grassroots innovations such as CSAs are vulnerable to 'shocks like funding cuts, key people leaving, turnover of volunteers, burnout of activists, shifts in government policy' (2007:596). Sonnino and Griggs-Trevarthen have argued that '(t)he resilience of these initiatives depends, in a sense, on their capacity to involve the local community – an involvement that translates into greater access to volunteers, more successful fundraising and access to the knowledge and skills of different people' (2013:283). Seyfang and Smith state that 'establishing an initiative requires a particular combination of skills, key individuals and champions, resources and supportive contextual factors' (2006:13). White and Stirling contend that 'initiatives may be fragile due to the development of new working relationships' and exhibit inordinate dependence on the goodwill of those who participate (2013:838).

Authors such as Lamb have asserted that CSAs are unduly reliant on volunteer labour with regard to their overall management and day-to-day growing practices (1994); Alkon has referred to this style of altruism as '(s)acrificing for the cause' (2008:492). However, the demands on

farmers and their close associates can become burdensome and excessive; DeLind describes her own experiencing of initiating a CSA scheme in Michigan: '(e)veryone who originally assumed a leadership role has left the organization – the majority *burned-out* or otherwise disappointed' (1999:3, my italics). At Weardale CSA in north-east England, Charles describes how many participants became disillusioned or fatigued by lengthy and bureaucratic funding and planning applications that were necessary to launch the scheme: '(a) core group of very committed and resilient people remain' (2011:367). DeLind and Harman Fackler argue that 'there is a lopsidedness to the sharing that occurs in CSA. Simply put, most farmers still aren't able to share the "tough stuff" with their members' (1999:5). Galt contends that self-exploitation of farmers, and others that manage CSA schemes, is routine and argues that it impinges on the viability of schemes 'because the longevity of CSA as a social formation can be undermined by its own monetary undervaluing' (2013:347). However, Hinrichs has stated that if share prices are too high members will leave a CSA, threatening the overall prospects of the scheme (2000). In Chapter 6 I interrogate how CSA schemes achieve and retain viability, and its consequences for the social movement of Community Supported Agriculture in the UK.

Lamb has argued that CSA demands that consumers make sacrifices: '(i)t is not a complicated task, but it does require that people who participate be personally *willing to give up* old habits of thought and action regarding the production, distribution, and consumption of food' (1994:10, my italics). Hamilton claims that 'CSA's success depends mainly on consumer commitment... they must sacrifice a fair amount of the choice we cling to so feverishly' (1997:2). Ostrom has used the phrase '*supermarket withdrawal*' to describe member dissatisfaction with 'receiving the wrong vegetables in the wrong quantities at the wrong times' (2007:110). Ostrom also observed that subscribers found other sources of fresh produce more economical because it wasn't necessary to purchase items that they disliked (ibid). However, Cooley and Lass claim that CSA veg-shares were less expensive, in the order of 60% to 150%, compared with retail prices for organic produce (1996).

Stagl identified other 'demand barriers' to CSA membership such as 'the necessity of making extra trips, the perception of the concept as being too troublesome, reduced predictability in pre-planning meals, the pick-up being too far from home or work place, too high share price and scheduling problems' (2002:158). Goland claims that '(t)he challenge of dealing with food and meal preparation in new ways is responsible for much of the high turnover rate experienced by CSAs' (2002:15) and Starr maintains that 'what is crucial for success of the scheme is acclimatizing people to the joys and limitations of seasonal eating and teaching people to cook all the odd vegetables they will receive' (2010:484). Furthermore, authors have argued that the additional burden of CSA practices falls disproportionately on female household members

(Allen, 1999; Little et al., 2009) to the extent that CSA schemes rely on women who are un- or under-employed to make the necessary lifestyle adaptations (Cone and Myhre, 2000).

Zepeda et al. claim that members who overcome ‘*CSA inconvenience*’ (Laird, 1998) were ‘more ‘*big-picture*’ (in terms of sustainability and political movements)’, whereas those who left CSA schemes were more concerned with intrinsic qualities related to food and cooking (2013:612, my italics). Other authors have observed that CSAs contribute to more sustainable behaviours in the realm of food (Feagan and Henderson, 2009; O’Hara and Stagl, 2001; Russell and Zepeda, 2008) and Hayden and Buck observed that members at a CSA just outside the New York metropolitan area ‘experience a general consciousness-raising whereby they report a greater awareness of the web of intermingling actors in an interdependent food system’ (2012:340). Dowler et al., who also used Earthshare as one of six case studies, observed a ‘graduation effect’ on CSA members’ behaviour: ‘people found themselves rethinking and refining other consumption practices to match their ethical frameworks’ (2010:210). In Chapter 6 I develop the small body of literature in the UK concerning how members adapt to the values and praxes that are inherent to Community Supported Agriculture, and consider how this affects the transformative potential of my case studies.

2.6

Conclusions

In this chapter I located my research regarding Community Supported Agriculture within academic research concerning socio-political transformations and local food supply networks. In the first section I outlined the trajectory of literature belonging to the social sciences in respect of food and I positioned my research as an example of this expanding genre. Secondly, I referred to the literature of Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) and I discussed the related concepts of the *quality turn*, *embeddedness* and *alternativeness*. I described how Community Supported Agriculture conformed to the attributes of AFNs, such as closer relationships between producers and consumers and a commitment to non-economic values. I depicted CSA as an expression of the consumer turn to quality food in response to perceived shortcomings and limitations of the conventional food system. I argued that CSA is a food supply network that exhibits social embeddedness and I described how CSA has the potential to be socially and politically progressive comprising ‘autonomous food spaces’.

In the third section I referred to the literature of *socio-technical transitions*, *grassroots innovations*, and *social resilience*. I described how Community Supported Agriculture can be regarded as an illustration of these three related theoretical approaches. I introduced the multi-level perspective (MLP) model of transition theory to contextualise my central research question

concerning the transformative potential of Community Supported Agriculture. I argued that CSA can be considered a microlevel niche that has the potential to reconfigure the dominant mezzolevel food regime within an unsustainable landscape comprising threats to the regime such as climate change. I then refined this argument by mobilising the concept of *grassroots innovations* to recognise the social dimensions of community-led niche developments. Finally, I argued that socially embedded Community Supported Agriculture can be a channel for communities to achieve place-based social resilience.

In the concluding section of this chapter I referred specifically to literature that relates to Community Supported Agriculture. I described the limited body of literature concerning CSA in the UK and I drew on a much larger corpus of research that emanates predominantly from North America. I referred to CSA literature which intersects with dominant themes that I identified during the course of my fieldwork. I used the literature to introduce themes such as *community*, *moral economy* and *viability* that are the organising principles of my subsequent results chapters. These dominant themes address gaps in academic knowledge concerning CSA schemes in the UK in particular, and the transformative potential of Community Supported Agriculture in general.

In the following chapter I define my methodological approach, describe the design of my research, and outline my research methods in relation to my principal research question: *What is the potential of Community Supported Agriculture to promote resilience and contribute to transition in the UK?*

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1

Introduction

I begin this chapter by describing my methodological approach and explaining why it was appropriate to this study. I then provide a rationale and description of the two contrasting case studies that I chose in order to address my research question. I outline my research methods and reflect on my positionality and reflexivity as a researcher; I then discuss the benefits and drawbacks of these research methods. I describe my theoretical approach to data analysis using Grounded Theory and how I stored, organised and analysed the data that I collected during the course of my fieldwork. Finally I detail how I reached my main research findings that I describe in my three results chapters.

3.2

Methodological approach

The focus of this study consists of Community Supported Agriculture initiatives the UK. The study specifically consists of a comparison of two nascent and contrasting CSAs situated in peri-urban England and rural Wales. My principal research question comprises: *What is the potential of Community Supported Agriculture to promote resilience and contribute to transition in the UK?* The purpose of this research is to identify issues and concerns that facilitate, or impede, the transformative potential of CSAs to promote resilience and contribute to transition towards a more sustainable and localised food system.

I described in Chapter 2 how I identified key themes such as *community*, *moral economy* and *viability* within existing CSA literature that are germane to understanding the transformative potential of Community Supported Agriculture. These concepts relating to individual's behaviour and beliefs suggested that an ethnographic approach to my methodology would be most appropriate to elicit data grounded in the communities of CSA that I wished to study.

According to Mason, the means most suited to obtaining primary data is to 'interact with people, to talk to them, to listen to them, and to gain access to their accounts and articulations' (1996:39). My research adopts the epistemological position that the testimony and actions of CSA participants are a legitimate source of evidence if the data are theoretically evaluated and interpreted: 'people's knowledge, views, understandings, interpretations, experiences, and interactions are meaningful properties of social reality' (ibid). Kerstetter cites "The Insider Doctrine" which 'holds that outsider researchers will never truly understand a culture or situation if they have not experienced it' (2012:100). Therefore I adopted an ethnographic case study approach to understand the issues through a process of immersion. Ethnographers argue

that intimate exposure must precede interpretation: ‘it is necessary to learn the culture of the group one is studying before one can produce valid explanations for the behaviour of its members’ (Hammersley, 1998:9). Therefore Tornaghi and Van Dyck claim that ‘(o)ur direct involvement in practices of both insurgent urbanism and in food sovereignty initiatives gives us a deep understanding of *the issues at stake* and an embodied understanding of *hidden conflicts*’ (2015:1260, my italics).

The principle of naturalism applies to ethnography: it is most appropriate to study people in their natural environment, or milieu. Hammersley and Atkinson argue that individuals are indivisible from their circumstances and that ‘social events and processes must be explained in terms of their relationship to the contexts in which they occur’ (2007:8). The intention of the ethnography was to research CSA participants in their natural settings (Creswell, 2003; Evans, 1988; Lareau and Schultz, 1996), comprising ‘‘face-to-face’ situations, mundane interaction, (and) micro-interaction or everyday life’ (Brewer, 2000:33). Ethnographers spend sufficient time in a community ‘to acquire some notion of acceptance and understanding’ (Lareau and Schultz, 1996:3); they seek ‘to understand the character of the day-to-day life of the people in the study’ (ibid:4). An emic, or insider’s, perspective of reality ‘is at the heart of most ethnographic research’ (Fetterman, 2009:2). Hammersley observes that ‘ethnography is not far removed from the sort of approach we all use in everyday life to make sense of our surroundings’ (1998:2). During the course of my research my protracted and in-depth ethnography effectively became my own ‘everyday life’ as I assumed respective roles on each of the executive bodies of the schemes and participated in the day-to-day CSA practices.

The intention of the ethnographic methodology was to produce a ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973) of contrasting case studies that had ‘depth and roundedness of understanding’ (Mason, 1996:41). This methodology, and its associated methods, was appropriate to my research question because it allowed me to comprehend and interpret the context, processes, meanings, values and beliefs, and any unanticipated phenomena and influences that comprised my case study CSAs, their membership, and associated individuals (Maxwell, 1998). An ethnographic methodology allowed me to conduct ‘fine-grained research and analysis to reveal what is actually happening in practice, and the direction of movement’ (Pratt, 2009:173); this approach provided me with matchless and indispensable access to CSA case studies and their associates. My study is an example of research that Goodman describes as ‘determinedly micro-analytical and ethnographic in its investigation of place-based and socially embedded alternative food practices’ (2003:1). Despite describing herself as ‘a bruised and somewhat wiser anthropologist’, DeLind, after conducting an ethnography of a North American CSA, claims that: ‘I would not have written from any visceral attachment or passion’ (1999:8). My

ethnographic approach allowed me to write from a position of authority and insight that would otherwise have been absent from this study.

Nost has asserted that '(t)he goal of a case study approach is not to achieve some sense of representativeness but to write narratives that link... to broader trends and forces in local food production' (2014:155). In this study I employ case studies to examine their transformative potential as individual schemes, and to consider implications for the broader UK movement. The CSA schemes that are the foci of this research are both examples of 'a special case study with a broader bearing' and are not intended to be representative (Brewer, 2000:132). The findings relating to this methodology will elicit '*moderatum* generalisations' (Williams, 2002, original italics) that may 'give some degree of predictability, but only with regard to specific conditions' (Corbin and Strauss, 1990:5). Sonnino and Griggs-Trevarthen researched five local food initiatives in Oxfordshire and state that '(t)he small research sample makes it impossible to draw generalizations from this study' (2013:273). The findings of this study are also specific to my case studies, but may indicate the transformative potential of CSAs in other comparable circumstances.

3.3.1

Rationale for the choice of my case studies

I began this research by conducting an online survey of local food initiatives in Sheffield; this information comprised the empirical basis of my research proposal to the Department of Geography at the University of Sheffield. This elementary level of enquiry revealed an apparently thriving alternative food environment in Sheffield comprising community gardens, community allotments, city farms and innovative NGOs such as Grow Sheffield³⁷ that promotes urban growing with an emphasis on the arts and that also pioneered the first Abundance³⁸ fruit-gathering scheme. Consequently I supplemented this initial research with a more thorough scoping exercise of AFN initiatives in the region of south Yorkshire. I identified in excess of thirty AFNs including two examples of Community Supported Agriculture³⁹. I also considered related avenues of research such as food hubs (Matson et al., 2011; Morley et al., 2008); public food (Morgan, 2008; New Economics Foundation, 2011); food policy councils (Lang et al.

³⁷ 'Grow Sheffield support and encourage Sheffield communities to grow and harvest food. We achieve this through artistic engagement, participatory projects, education, information, access to training and resources, visits, social and networking events, skills- and information-sharing opportunities'

Source: <http://www.eatsheffield.com/grow-sheffield/>

³⁸ 'Harvests the seasonal glut of fruit across the city and redistribute this surplus to the local communities on a non-profit basis. The project volunteers also plant fruit trees, offer workshops on fruit tree pruning and grafting and run chutney and jam making workshops'

Source: <http://www.eatsheffield.com/grow-sheffield/>

³⁹ See Appendices for Typology of AFNs in Sheffield (p.303)

2010, Renting and Wiskerke, 2010) and community food co-ops (Elliot et al., 2006; Pearson et al., 2011).

According to Smart, a case study ‘focuses on a small number of informants in their everyday rounds of life’ (2008:57). Tregear states that ‘(i)n AFN research, the favoured empirical methodology is clearly the case study’ (2011:11); she claims that they ‘are valuable for exploring and explaining process, interaction, and the dynamics of system evolution, and hence are well-suited to the field’ (ibid). However, when Venn et al. reviewed literature on AFNs they were highly critical of the methodologies used to select case studies (2006). They cited an undue emphasis on individual projects and commented that sparse attention had been paid to the broader population of food networks from which individual case studies were selected, thus raising epistemological questions about the validity of the data collected and whether it is possible to generalise the findings of such research. In particular, the authors emphasised:

(t)he paucity of information from commentators relating to how such examples were discovered. As a result, the reader can often only assume that contact and selection of such cases was due to geographical proximity and/or prior knowledge of, or interaction with, members of the scheme, as many papers fail to reflect or comment upon the identification, selection and wider relevance of their cases

(ibid:253)

For example, Seyfang (2007) studied Eostre Organics, a producer cooperative based in Norfolk, East Anglia close to her academic institution and Murdoch and Miele justified their selection of food producers in Italy by stating only that ‘(o)ur case studies document two movements’ (1999:473). Marsden and Franklin also observe that there has been an ‘over-reliance on individual case study research that has somewhat dominated the field thus far’ (2013:636).

Comparative case studies are a useful and frequent means of conducting research. Howe and Wheeler chose a comparative study of two community projects in Leeds and Bradford ‘to unpack the nature of urban food growing’ (1999:16). The schemes were chosen because they were situated within Local Authorities that demonstrated contrasting policy approaches to urban food growing. The authors utilised the differences to illustrate how local governance is essential in shaping food growing practices in particular settings. Middlemiss and Parrish compared two case studies of grassroots initiatives for low-carbon communities in the UK and North America (2010). According to the authors, ‘(t)he cases were chosen for this paper because they both deal with building capacity for low-carbon communities from the grassroots, but in very different circumstances’ and ‘(t)his difference allows us to draw out some of the common features across

the two cases, and therefore to identify cross-cutting issues in this area' (ibid:7562). My two contrasting case studies permitted an examination of the commonalities and divergences that intersected and traversed these CSAs, their participants, and close associates (Marcus, 1995).

According to the Soil Association, there are four prevalent models of CSAs that are operating in the UK (Soil Association, (n.d.,a). My case studies were intended to consist of an example of each of the two most typical CSA models (Merkens, 2004; Yin, 1998): *farmer-led* and *community-driven*. The selection is therefore purposive and intended to be illustrative of the phenomena under study (Bryman, 2008; Henry, 1997). Guthman et al. employed a similar strategy to study different organizational models of CSAs in California (2006). However, during the course of my fieldwork my classification of COCA as a *farmer-led* CSA was challenged. The following interviewee claimed that the farmer was merely the impetus for the scheme, arguing that COCA became *community-driven* after the establishment of a Core Group which, apart from cultivation, managed the key functions of the CSA:

Gareth was the initial spark and he was the one who said "Come on, let's have a go everyone"

Ben, COCA

Conversely, another interviewee at COCA was more in accord with my interpretation of COCA as a *farmer-led* CSA:

It's really Gareth's, except that he's got the membership to run it [smiles]

Maddy, COCA

Therefore, although the rationale for my case study selection was to include each of the most prevalent models of CSA, COCA arguably combined elements of a *farmer-led* and *community-driven* CSA.

At the outset of my research both my CSA case studies had been established for approximately three years and I considered them to be representative of the 'young, but surging, local foods movement' (Halweil, 2002:7). My case studies are further differentiated as *urban* and *rural*, their comparative geographical situations being a separate rationale for the selection of these case studies (*see figure 4*). One case study was in Wales nearby to my home, the other close to my academic institution, the University of Sheffield.



Figure 4: My case study locations in south Yorkshire and west Wales

3.3.2

Description of my case studies

*Hazlehurst Community Supported Agriculture Co-operative, Sheffield, south Yorkshire (Hazlehurst)*⁴⁰

Hazlehurst in Sheffield emerged from a contingent of the membership of Transition Sheffield in the form of a grassroots initiative to promote a low-carbon local food supply chain; I identified Hazlehurst as a *community-led* CSA. The CSA represents a direct response to the central concerns of the Transition Movement regarding “peak oil” and “climate change” (Hopkins, 2008). Sage maintains that ‘(t)he single most important focus of practical activity across the transition movement is the growing and supply of local food’ (2014:9). Initially a Steering Group, and subsequently a Management Committee, was formed to oversee the operation of the project and Hazlehurst was brought to fruition with the appointment of a part-time commercial grower in March 2012. The first veg-share was produced in the summer of 2012, although the

⁴⁰ <http://hazlehurst.coop/>

CSA experimented during the previous year with some crops such as potatoes using volunteer labour. Hazlehurst offer three sizes of share on a weekly basis in a veg-bag; the veg-shares are collated at a location in central Sheffield and delivered by volunteers to a series of neighbouring drop-off points. Towards the end of the first season a Project Manager was appointed using grant funding to manage the veg-bag scheme and organise outreach work on behalf of the CSA⁴¹.



Figure 5: The polytunnel at Hazlehurst

Source: the author

Two years previously the CSA were given an option to purchase 9 acres of land to the south of Sheffield in the Moss Valley that had been acquired by a Quaker philanthropist. Although Hazlehurst launched a community share offer they were unable to raise sufficient capital and the land-owner subsequently divided the field into four plots of approximately 2 acres with an acre of common land for shared access and occasional camping. Consequently, Hazlehurst rents one of the 2 acre segments including a polytunnel (see figure 5); the remaining plots were occupied by the owner himself who grows commercially; a whole-food shop based in Sheffield that has a subscription veg-box distribution scheme; and an independent grower who also runs his own veg-box scheme. Hazlehurst created another community share offer to raise capital to fund the

⁴¹ See Chapter 4 for a fuller account of the role of Hazlehurst's Project Manager

grower before revenue from the veg-share subscriptions was received; the CSA has also been in receipt of grant funding to assist with the initial start-up phase.

*Caerhys Organic Community Agriculture (COCA)*⁴²

My comparative case study in west Wales is indicative of an initiative that has been developed by a local farmer with the support of enthusiastic members of the local community; I originally identified COCA as a *farmer-led* CSA. The resident farmer approached a local environmental group called St Davids Eco-City Group⁴³ with a proposal to form a CSA on his farm with the intention of employing one of his sons who lived on the farm:

(A)s an eco-group we were right behind from the beginning. You know, we just all agreed straight away that it was a really good project to try and propose and get it going

Annie, COCA

Gareth explained from Day 1 that he wanted the CSA to provide income for Deri, for one of his sons, and we all supported that because it was the start, so we've always been right behind that

Ben, COCA

The farmer has dedicated a small proportion of his land (4 acres of a 120-acre holding) to the CSA project (*see figure 6*). Caerhys Farm is located at the south-western tip of Pembrokeshire near the small cathedral city of St Davids on a site overlooking the Irish Sea. The farm has previously diversified from organic potato cultivation to hemp production, raising pork, offering livery services, and providing bed and breakfast accommodation.

A Core Group, of which the farmer and his son were both members, was swiftly established at COCA to manage the operation of the project. Core Group members and other key participants subscribed in advance of the first season's crop in 2010 and St Davids Eco-City Group provided a funding grant of £1000 to initiate the scheme through the purchase of seeds and equipment. By November 2012 COCA was able to employ Gareth's son, Deri, on a part-time basis to grow vegetables for the scheme. Originally members were required to weigh their own weekly veg-

⁴² <http://www.coca-csa.org/>

⁴³ 'St Davids Eco City Group initiates and/or supports projects which enhance local sustainability. Projects include a bio-diesel hub, plastics recycling; an eco-trail around St Davids, photo-voltaic cell installation on the primary school roof, rain-water harvesting and solar lighting at public toilets and an electric car for daily hire'

Source: <http://www.stdavids.co.uk/ecocity/>

shares. Subsequently the Core Group devised a system of pre-weighted veg-shares and *remote hubs*⁴⁴. The CSA offers a full-share and a half-share of vegetables in a weekly box.

Although COCA can be perceived of as a form of rural diversification, the finances of the CSA scheme are kept entirely separate from the farm business, although both operations share farm resources such as tools and machinery. At the point of my fieldwork, COCA was a similar age to Hazlehurst but it had been fully operational as a veg-share subscription scheme for a whole season and had the equivalent of 30 subscribers. COCA has also been in receipt of grant funding to assist with specific purposes such as erecting a polytunnel, purchasing tools, and hiring an experienced organic grower to provide monthly tuition in horticulture. At the COCA Annual General Meeting of 2012, Gareth told the membership that ‘you’ve made a dream of mine come true’. COCA is incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee run along cooperative principles.



Figure 6: The growing site of COCA at Caerhys Farm near St Davids, west Wales

Source: the author

⁴⁴ See Chapter 5 for a more detailed discussion of this development (p.168)

3.4.1

Research methods

The methods I employed to collect data at my case studies consisted of an extended and intensive ethnography. In the course of my research I used the following data-gathering techniques:

Participant observation of 2 CSAs as a Core Group/Management Committee member and as a volunteer in the field settings

(duration = circa 2 years)

Semi-structured interviews of key CSA figures; CSA membership; and ex-members

(number = circa 15 at each case study)

The combination of methods permitted two forms of triangulation: *between-method* (my observations versus the content of the interviews I conducted) and *within-method* facilitated by extended observation and reflection over a prolonged time (Flick, 2004). This allowed me to compare my own observations with the experience of those I interviewed over a period of two years to corroborate and substantiate my findings, such as the different aspects of personal sacrifice I witnessed amongst CSA participants⁴⁵. Nost describes the benefits of triangulating my two research methods: ‘(a)sking a farmer directly what they think about the prospects of local foods may solicit a rosy response, while paying attention to practices *will often paint a different picture*’ (2014:155, my italics). In addition to my primary data collection methods, I maintained a Research Diary with field-notes and reflections:

Excerpt from Research Diary #1:

We are holding our first Core Group Meeting since the 2013 AGM. The setting for the meeting is the Breakfast Room at Gareth and Amy's stone built farmhouse. Outside the sea mist has descended obscuring the horizon above the distant ocean. It is an imposing yet comfortable square room with round dining tables and large sofas. Family portraits adorn the walls, lined with cabinets on two sides that contain treasured ornaments and china tea sets; a kettle boils on a sideboard where a new member attends to a round of refreshments. Gareth distributes silver place mats 'in honour of the occasion' across the two dining tables that we have drawn together to sit around. Four of the assembled (of eight) are new to the group and there is a slight tension as people make their introductions and settle into discussion. Pete is chairing the meeting and the first item on the agenda concerns the replacement of the

⁴⁵ I discuss the concept of sacrifice in Chapter 6

Chair, a key role that has been vacant since the recent AGM. Pete proposes Ben who readily accepts and, in the absence of alternatives, consensus is quickly reached that this is the best option to pursue. As I glance up from the papers gathered in front of me I notice through the window directly ahead of me the flank of an animal with brown and grey fur that I assume to be a dog. As the meeting proceeds the animal re-appears at a side window roaming the lawn beneath a laden washing line that sways in the breeze and I can see that it is a pig

23rd April 2013

For example, this excerpt illustrates the unity that the COCA Core Group enjoyed, even in a transition between two elected groups: ‘consensus is quickly reached’. Consensus, or lack of it, was contributory to the resilience of my case studies and in Chapter 5 I describe in greater detail *moral tensions* as one of my case studies sought to establish the ethical positions of the CSA including its governance structure during the period of formation.

3.4.2

Participant observation

Participant observation places the researcher within the ‘everyday life-world’ (Kitchin and Tate, 2000) of a group of individuals in their natural surroundings over an extended period of time (Creswell, 2003). Because extended observation allows the researcher to study participants’ behaviour in their own surroundings it ‘yields fascinating insights into people’s social lives and relationships’ (May, 1997:138). It is a holistic approach that combines description and interpretation in a single iterative process (Kitchin and Tate, 2000). The participant observer is the instrument and medium of study, literally ‘becoming the phenomenon’ (Laurier, 2003:135). According to Eyles, an ethnographer should combine a *participant’s* insights with an *observer’s* detachment (1988). Hammersley and Atkinson regard participant observation as the research method of ‘common sense’ (2007). However, it is also arguably the ‘most personally demanding and analytically difficult’ method (Creswell, 2003:138) as it depends on the skill of the researcher to identify and interpret significant events and comprehend their underlying meanings (Kitchin and Tate, 2000).

In Sheffield I initially established contact with Hazlehurst through email communication. However, I was acquainted with some of the key individuals whose membership overlapped with Transition Sheffield⁴⁶; I met these individuals at occasional Transition Sheffield meetings

⁴⁶ ‘We are motivated by the challenges of climate change and the energy crisis to engage all of Sheffield’s communities in the transition to a sustainable society. We aim for healthier, happier, inclusive, creative and resilient communities, free from dependence on fossil fuels’

at a city-centre venue during the period that I was initially scoping potential case studies. I subsequently attended the AGM of Hazlehurst in October 2011 when the entire Management Committee stepped down after three years of service; in these circumstances I was able to approach the newly-elected Chair and offer myself as a member of the next Management Committee.

I was also slightly familiar with COCA, my case study in Wales, as I had attended a study trip to Stroud Community Agriculture with some prominent members. A local NGO⁴⁷ that aims to promote sustainable communities in Pembrokeshire organised the trip whilst COCA was still in its planning phase and I joined the party as an interested individual. I subsequently made formal contact with COCA and attended a monthly Core Group meeting; the incumbent Treasurer tendered their resignation and I was immediately invited to take on the role. To a certain extent, therefore, my admission to both case study CSAs was opportunistic and fortuitous.

Cherry et al. have described the importance of a researcher's "consumption identity" in terms of gaining access to study specific communities (2011). I had a pre-existing personal affinity with organic vegetable production having previously volunteered as a wwoof⁴⁸ on organic farms. As mentioned previously, I had also encountered key individuals at both of my case studies in the context of Transition Sheffield meetings and the Stroud Community Agriculture study trip. These prior social connections helped to establish my credentials at Hazlehurst and COCA as a 'friendly outsider' in advance of my participant observation (Charles, 2011).

Andrew Dawson employed participant observation to research a remote spiritual community in the Amazonian region of Peru (2010). Drawing on the work of Gold (1958) who identified a four-part typology of 'master-roles' in participant observation, Dawson describes how he chose the 'master-role' of *observer as participant* as the most appropriate form of participant observation for his study. The author depicts *observer as participant* as an active role that, in the context of his case study, consisted of taking part in the ritual practices of his host community. By contrast, he characterises *participant as observer* as a more passive role that 'concentrates chiefly upon the acquisition of data through structured means', such as conducting interviews (ibid:175) (see figure 7). Dawson claims that, because of the centrality of the practice of ritual to his study group, adopting the less active *participant as observer* role 'would have resulted in me being regarded as unworthy of the time and attention necessary to building any *meaningful degree of rapport* with potential informants' (ibid, my italics).

Source: <http://www.transitionssheffield.org/about/>

⁴⁷ Pembrokeshire Local Action Network for Enterprise and Development (PLANED)

⁴⁸ Worldwide Workers on Organic Farms (Wwoofers)

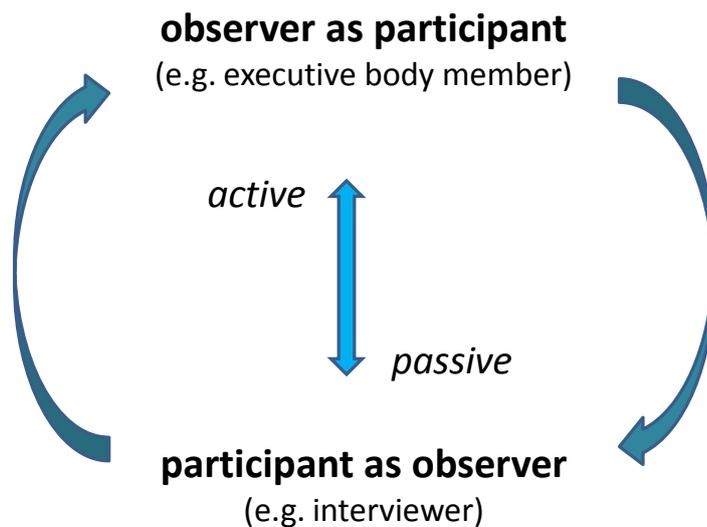


Figure 7: The hybrid identity of the participant observer

Dawson states that ‘dynamics native to the fieldwork context should, as far as one is able, be taken into account when considering which particular master role to adopt’ (ibid). In the setting of my own case studies, I also selected an *observer as participant* approach. Both of my case studies were grassroots innovations (Seyfang and Smith, 2007) that consisted largely of volunteer effort on and off the field of cultivation⁴⁹. Therefore I considered it most appropriate to adopt a methodological approach which privileged participation in favour of observation, reflecting the situation of my case studies. Furthermore, I wanted to employ a research methodology that allowed me to immerse myself as fully as possible in the quotidian practices and approaches of each CSA. I also believed that this approach would facilitate a more nuanced, insightful and sensitive appreciation of the factors that encourage and inhibit the transformative potential of Community Support Agriculture.

Participant observation depends on accurate and regular note-taking, and is especially time-consuming (Yin, 1998). Emerson et al. have argued that field-notes can comprise the detailed core of research data or be employed more sparingly as *aide-memoirs* (1995). I adopted the latter approach, making ‘scratch-notes’ (Crang, 1994), either contemporaneously or shortly afterwards, and elaborating them as soon as possible afterwards to add further reflections or to embellish description and impressions of events and research encounters. Ryan and Bernard have described field-notes ‘as a kind of theme filter, choosing (often subconsciously) what data are important to record and what data are not. In this sense, producing field-notes is a process of identifying themes’ (2003:100). At the outset of my research I made few, if any, field-notes as I was unsure what to record, and overwhelmed by the potentially infinitesimal volume of

⁴⁹ I discuss the culture of volunteerism at my case studies in Chapter 6

material. As dominant themes became apparent during my ethnography, I consolidated my observations with field-notes that either corroborated or contradicted my initial findings.

I also kept a photographic record of the case studies that I employ in this thesis as a contextual device to support my arguments. I use the images in this thesis ‘as a way of recording data, *to illustrate or describe*’, rather than as a separate methodological approach (Prosser, 1995:29, my italics) (*see figure 8*). However, Rose contends that ‘particular visualities structure certain kinds of geographical knowledges’ (2003:213). Therefore my choice of images, as I took photographs and when I selected them for inclusion in the thesis, reflects my particular ‘gaze’ on the case studies (Urry, 1990), and how I visually mediate the (re)presentation of the two CSAs (Crang, 1997).



Figure 8: Scarecrow at COCA

Source: the author

3.4.3

Reflexivity and positionality

Creswell has stated that ethnography is always an intrusive process (2003); the presence of the researcher inevitably influences the behaviour of those being studied (Kitchin and Tate, 2000). Crang and Cook also observe that ‘research is an embodied activity that draws in our whole physical person, along with *all its inescapable identities*’ (2007:9, my italics). Therefore Valentine argues that the researcher must be reflexive and recognise that the gender, race, class, nationality, politics, history and experience of both the researcher and the participants will influence the outcomes of the research (2005). In addition, relationships between researchers and those being researched are often asymmetric (England, 1994) but not necessarily uni-directional (Clark, 2010; Thapar-Bjorkert and Henry, 2004). Consequently, all research encounters are ‘power-laden’ (Valentine, 2005); and ‘therefore, inherently political’ (Cook, 2005:177).

The influence of the researcher is wrought throughout the research process from the initial choice of problem, research design, selection of setting, the means of analysis, and style of writing (Taylor, 2001). Schiellerup refers to this process as defining ‘the kinds of stories to tell and not to tell’ (2008:163). Mullings contends that ‘(a) researcher’s knowledge is therefore always partial, because his/her positionality (perspective shaped by his/ her unique mix of race, class, gender, nationality, sexuality and other identifiers), as well as location in time and space will influence how the world is viewed and interpreted’ (1999:337). Reflexivity is a process of ‘turning back on oneself, a process of self-reference’ (Davies, 1999:4).

Mauthner and Doucet have stated that ‘a profound level of self-awareness and self-consciousness is required to begin to capture the perspectives through which we view the world, and that *it may be impossible* to grasp the unconscious filters through which we experience events’ (2003:425, my italics). Hence, they claim that ‘(i)t may be more useful to think in terms of ‘*degrees of reflexivity*’ (ibid, my italics). Luttrell maintains that it is possible to be reflexive in research practice and ‘a “*good enough*” researcher’ is able to ‘accept rather than defend against healthy tensions in fieldwork’ (2000:515, my italics). Throughout the data-gathering period, and process of learning to gather the data, I sought to exercise reflexivity in the ongoing process of “being and becoming” a researcher (Giampapa, 2011:132).

Dawson observes how the researcher circulates between the roles of *observer as participant* and *participant as observer* depending on whether one is active in the co-production of the case study, such as performing a role on the executive body of the CSA, or whether one adopts a more passive participatory role, such as when conducting interviews. The author also contends

that when my identity shifted from *observer as participant* to *participant as observer*, it necessitates an identity shift by members of the CSAs that I encountered. Therefore, individuals who I worked alongside in the field, or who I shared a position on the executive body with, adjusted their relationship towards me in the formal setting of an interview. Consequently there is an ongoing inter-subjective process of ‘insider/outsider’ identity (re)formation between the researcher *and* the researched as the multiple axes of their complementary identities shift along a continuum of unstable positions during the practice of research (Ergun and Erdemir, 2010; Ryan et al., 2011; Thapar-Bjorkert and Henry, 2004).



Figure 9: The growing site at Hazlehurst

Source: the author

During my fieldwork I continually negotiated my shifting dual identities as *observer as participant* and *participant as observer*. At the outset of my research I deliberately and consciously disclosed my role as a researcher to those I encountered at my case studies. However, during the course of my fieldwork my role and presence became increasingly ‘normalised’, although new members and volunteers who were unaware of the antecedents of my membership continued to join the CSAs. Whilst working in the field at my case study in Sheffield (see figure 9) a new volunteer enquired who I was. I revealed my identity as a member of the Management Committee of the CSA and my role as PhD student:

Oh, so you are researching us...

I felt uncomfortable and denied that they were the focus of my research, although the experience we shared together in the field was undeniably an element of my ethnographic participant observation. Fuller also experienced this tension during his research on credit unions in Kingston-Upon-Hull: 'I was becoming increasingly aware of the conflict between the detached observer and the unavoidable inclusion of the researcher' (1999:225). As he became progressively immersed and involved in the workings of credit union, he characterised himself as having two heads: 'one the researcher's, the other the 'normal me'' (ibid). Dwyer and Buckle refer to this internal conflict experienced by the researcher as 'role confusion' (2009).

Kerstetter claims that a researcher's 'level of formal education and access to resources... connote(s) a more privileged and powerful status in the larger society' (2012:99). My role as a PhD student conferred a particular identity on me as a member of the Management Committee at one of my case studies:

Ian Humphrey: member without portfolio

Enjoys being member without portfolio, as this has allowed him to help in a number of situations as they arise -- our firefighter.

As he is continuing his PhD he is able to provide a link to what is happening in CSA movements. For example, he recently attended international conference.

minutes of Hazlehurst Management Committee meeting, 6th November 2012⁵⁰

I was perceived to be uniquely capable on the Management Committee to share best practice from other CSAs that I had researched in the course of my studies, and from my experience at my other case study. Consequently, I was encouraged to contribute short articles to the Hazlehurst Newsletter that reflected my privileged position and heightened knowledge.

Dwyer and Buckle contend that '(h)olding membership in a group does not denote complete sameness within that group. Likewise, not being a member of a group does not denote complete difference' (2009:60). Rather, the authors suggest that researchers occupy '*the space between...* because our perspective is shaped by our position as a researcher' (ibid:61, my italics).

Hellawell contends that there are advantages to a researcher of both proximity *and* distance (2006), and Kerstetter refers to 'the *relative* nature of researchers' identities' (2012:99, my italics). DeLind states that: '(w)e are not simply one thing or another'; '(t)here are border crossings everywhere, connections, engagements, multiple and shifting identities' (1999:4).

However, Emerson et al. have observed that 'the fieldworker orients to many local events not as

⁵⁰ Minutes of Management Committee (Hazlehurst) and Core Group (COCA) meetings were usually taken by the Secretary and subsequently distributed as a document attached to an email

“real life” but as objects of possible research interest’ and, therefore, always remains ‘at least something of an outsider’ (1995:4). Although I immersed myself in both case studies for a period of two years, I believe that I remained, to a certain extent, an outsider in both communities, possibly because I wasn’t wholly resident in either⁵¹.

3.4.4

Semi-structured interviews

My second approach to gathering primary data was to conduct semi-structured interviews. The interviews were intended to compliment and substantiate the data collection from my participant observation and were conducted face-to-face and digitally recorded; I selected approximately fifteen participants in respect of each case study. Potential interviewees were identified through their membership of the CSAs; their past association with the schemes; and through a process of ‘snowballing’ by asking participants for further recommendations and introductions (Valentine, 2005). For example, at my case study in Sheffield I initially made a request to the Management Committee to approach the CSA membership:

Ian we have agree yr request to contact veg subscribers sounds great keep us informed. Sendind an email to each one a good start. Charlotte⁵²

by text from the Chair of Hazlehurst Management Committee, 29th August 2012⁵³

Prior to conducting my research the study was subject to ethical review by the University of Sheffield Research Ethics Committee⁵⁴. In accordance with this process, all participants were provided with an *Information Sheet*⁵⁵ regarding the content of the study and participants were subsequently invited to sign a *Consent Form*⁵⁶ that they kept a copy of. Anonymity was offered to all individuals who participated and I use a pseudonym whenever I quote a participant in this thesis. However, because I chose to identify my two CSA case studies, and due to the small scale of these community projects, there are inherent limits to the anonymity that I granted. Participants were also advised that they could withdraw at any time, for any reason, and without providing a reason. Prior to conducting interviews I reviewed the contents of the *Information Sheet* with participants, asked if they were prepared to be recorded, stated that they were not obliged to answer any question, could terminate the conversation at any point, and reminded

⁵¹ I typically spent half of each week in either England or Wales

⁵² Throughout this thesis I have adopted the convention of using primary data without spelling corrections

⁵³ See Appendices for the letter I sent to Hazlehurst subscribers (p.304)

⁵⁴ For further information on ethical review procedures at University of Sheffield see:

http://www.shef.ac.uk/ris/gov_ethics_grp/researchethics/approval-procedure/review-procedure/generic-research-projects.html

⁵⁵ See Appendices for *Information Sheet* (p.305)

⁵⁶ See Appendices for *Consent Form* (p.306)

them that they were still entitled to withdraw completely from the study at a later date, if they wished.

In accordance with the epistemology of the research design, ‘the interview allows a more thorough examination of experiences, feelings or opinions’ (Kitchin and Tate, 2000:213) and they provide ‘rich insights into people’s experiences, opinions, aspirations, attitudes and feelings’ (May, 1997:109). The interviews were of a conversational nature to allow participants to speak ‘in terms of their own frames of reference’ (ibid:112) and to reveal themselves ‘as they see fit’ (Kitchin and Tate, 2000:214). I used open-ended questioning to gather data, beginning each interview with a single question to stimulate conversation. Interviews necessarily vary ‘according to the interests, experiences and views of the interviewees’ but an open-ended approach generates data that is ‘rich, detailed and multi-layered’ and allows participants to reveal the ‘complexities and contradictions’ of their life-worlds (Valentine, 2005:111). For example, when interviewing women who had returned to education, Luttrell opened her conversations with a simple question: “Tell me what you remember about being in school” (2000:502). I usually asked a similar question to introduce and relax my participants: “Tell me how you first got involved in Hazlehurst?”

I chose the format of the interviews to reflect the complexity of the phenomena under study and to complement the non-standardised topics and responses that were likely to arise (Mason, 1996). Like participant observation, this method is a continuous transactional process between the researcher and the participant (Eyles, 1988) conducted in the negotiated ‘relational moment of the interview’ (Valentine, 2005:113). Elwood and Martin have argued that the site of interviews can affect the quality of the data that is collected and may reinforce power relations between the researcher and researched (2000). I always allowed my participants to choose the interview location which varied between public spaces, such as cafes; sites of the CSA case studies including farm buildings or the growing field; and in private homes, such as kitchens and living-rooms.

The choice of location invariably affected the quality of the sound recording, such as the creaking of a polytunnel in high winds at my case study in Wales (*see figure 10*), or the background noise of a busy museum cafe in Sheffield. Valentine states that some participants may prefer not to be recorded, thereby placing an additional burden and responsibility on the researcher to listen and simultaneously record the conversation in note form (2005). My first interview for this study comprised a married couple who were happy to describe their experience of helping to initiate the CSA at length but did not wish to be recorded; in this instance I made a series of contemporaneous notes. On another occasion my digital recorder

failed part-way through the interview and I had to re-construct my interviewee's responses shortly afterwards in note form.



Figure 10: Interview site: the polytunnel at COCA

Source: the author

I transcribed each recorded interview into Microsoft Word documents that I subsequently imported into NVivo software for analysis. I chose to transcribe recordings selectively to edit data that I considered extraneous or confused, and to reduce the associated time commitment of verbatim transcription. Therefore, in the context of this research, the selection, and de-selection, of material for analysis was part of the process of transcription. As I discussed earlier, I was also already using my Research Diary to identify themes such as 'consensus' that were to assume importance in my subsequent results chapters. The following excerpt from my Research Diary reveals other themes that began to recur and assume importance as a unit of analysis:

Excerpt from Research Diary #2:

It is a bright, warm Spring evening in Sheffield and five of us are gathered in a sitting-room to discuss the mechanics of making the Hazlehurst CSA veg-bag scheme operational⁵⁷. The flat is on the 11th floor of a tower block overlooking the busy London Road and nearby Bramall Lane stadium, home of Sheffield

⁵⁷ See figure 10

United Football Club. We could be in a penthouse, with our commanding views of the cityscape and the distant hum of the traffic beneath us but we are, in fact, in a modest Local Authority flat that is home to Geraldine who leads the extravagantly-titled Veg-Bag Marketing Sub-Group. We have recently volunteered as a group to specifically address the logistics of distributing the first season's harvest of produce to those members who have lately committed to a CSA share subscription. Geraldine dispenses herbal tea and hob-nobs and circulates an agenda as we settle into various seats amidst numerous books and bags and other belongings that compete for space in the congested room. Apart from an experienced local grower who has also advised on horticultural matters, we are all members of Hazlehurst, either on the Management Committee itself, or secondary to it. My official role on the Management Committee is 'Member without Portfolio' and, therefore, it seemed appropriate for me to volunteer on this sub-group as the remainder of the committee had at least one other function already, if not more. I reflect on the path that has led me as a researcher to this lofty eyrie and the task of making the veg-bag scheme functional in, as it seems, a very few weeks; I have no direct business experience but my background in project management can be applied. After all, it is largely a matter of common sense. Or so I hope, as I tentatively survey the small group of disparate individuals perched on chairs and sofas around me, wondering whether we have the collective resources and organisational ability to activate the scheme successfully in the brief space of time that remains before the launch of the Hazlehurst veg-bag. In some ways it feels a privilege to be so involved, so central; so *important*, in fact. However, it also feels like a huge responsibility. Gradually we proceed down the list of items on the agenda; I attempt to maintain a low-profile, offering suggestions when they seem helpful but trying not to interfere with Geraldine's delicate authority and direction. The design of the logo to be applied to the canvas veg-bag is discussed, as is the need to buy in staple supplies such as potatoes, carrots and onions to supplement produce from the field. We deliberate what kinds of bags are needed to contain salad within the canvas bags; should we choose an environmentally-sound, bio-degradable option or would it be better to purchase the cheaper, plastic alternative, at least in the short-term? Reluctantly, we choose the more plentiful and less expensive option. After an hour or so, the intensity of the sun has diminished and we are satisfied that most of the urgent points on the agenda have been attended to. After a tiring day at work one or two members of the group are growing restive and, to general relief, Geraldine concludes the meeting. We thank her for her hospitality, gather our belongings, and descend

in the whirring, winding lift to the bustle and clamour of a city that is largely oblivious and indifferent to our previous hour's exertions

13th March 2012

In the preceding diary entry I state that 'it feels a privilege to be so involved' reflecting the extent that I am assisting in the launch of the veg-bag scheme; 'However, it also feels like a huge responsibility'. At this early stage in my participant observation I was already expressing my concerns regarding the *capacity* of individuals, including myself: 'whether we have the collective resources and organisational ability to activate the scheme successfully'. Capacity subsequently became a dominant theme in Chapter 6: *Viability, Capacity and Sacrifice*. Later in the same passage I describe the ethical dilemma of selecting salad bags that were economically affordable; I explore the conflict between moral intentions and financial imperatives of Community Supported Agriculture in Chapter 5: *Moral Economy*. Therefore observations and field-notes collected in my Research Diary comprised another preliminary form of analysis in parallel with the process of ongoing interview transcription.



Figure 11: Flyer advertising the launch of the Hazelhurst veg-bag

3.4.5

Reflection on research methods

I greatly benefitted as a researcher from the embodied and acculturated methodological approach of ethnographic research:

Ian:

As I say, I kind of, ended up researching myself to a certain degree

Becky:

I think there's some things you can't, you can't know about without being involved

The above exchange took place towards the end of an interview with a member of Hazlehurst who asked me about my experience of researching the CSA. Becky substantiates my researcher role as *observer as participant* (Dawson, 2010). However, Kerstetter has also argued that immersion in a case study 'challenges the ability of insider researchers to analyze clearly that of which they are a part' (2012:100). Emerson et al. contend that the ethnographic method is indivisible from the data it generates: '*what* the ethnographer finds out is inherently connected with *how* she finds it out' (1995:11, original italics). There is also concern that interview participants self-select: '(p)eople have to choose to engage with research' (Clark, 2010:399), lending bias to the quality of data that is collected (Baxter and Eyles, 1997). During my fieldwork I encountered participants who used the interview to express strong feelings or beliefs regarding my CSA case studies and other participants. Cox et al. also detected biases during their research on Earthshare CSA in Scotland: 'those subscribers who are most committed to EarthShare and who identify with it most strongly could be over-represented amongst the group' (2008:208). In my own study I attempted to address bias in interviews by eliciting as wide a range of opinions as possible according to the individuals I met, or was introduced to, during my participant observation.

Participant observation and semi-structured interviews were both labour and time-intensive research methods (Yin, 1998) and I encountered problems balancing the demands of two distant case studies:

Excerpt from Research Diary #3:

Having two case studies has been a compromise as I am frequently in the 'wrong place' at the 'wrong time'. For example, I am not able to attend the COCA 2013 AGM in a couple of weeks in St Davids. In many respects I think it might have been braver to have chosen a single case study, even though the comparison between the two is useful too

I have under-estimated the amount of effort inscribed in an ethnography of two separate case studies. Today I have been working on COCA accounts and a newsletter for Hazlehurst until well into the early afternoon. Whilst this clearly affords me unrivalled access to my case studies, it frequently feels as though it impedes substantive progress on my PhD

7th March 2013

I experienced a constant tension between ‘*being*’ part of my case studies, such as my role as Treasurer at COCA, and ‘*doing*’ my research competently and proficiently. This translated into difficulties such as writing up my field-notes effectively and having sufficient time to reflect analytically on what I was experiencing as a participant observer, whilst simultaneously meeting the daily demands of my two roles at the case studies. The following excerpt from my Research Diary exemplifies the customary fieldwork tension I experienced ‘*doing*’ my research as an interviewer, whilst ‘*being*’ a participant in the weekly harvest:

Excerpt from Research Diary #4:

It is a warm summer’s afternoon in late August and I have just finished an interview with Fiona, a frequent volunteer on the field at COCA. The interview takes place in a spartan, dusty office at the end of one of the large barns on the farm. As usual, I have largely permitted my interviewee to dictate the content, allowing her interests and predilections to determine the course of the conversation. After half an hour Fiona abruptly closes the interview by announcing that she wants to participate in the weekly harvest on the field. In the field, a soft breeze rolls off the Irish Sea that lies calm and shimmering just beneath the cultivation area. Gareth and Deri hand each of us a sharp knife and direct us to crops that need harvesting. I spend some time collecting Swiss chard which is in abundance, descending in a long, voluminous row towards the coastline in vibrant stripes of red, yellow and green. There is something instantly satisfying about harvesting veg that you are confident will give pleasure to others. As I trim the bases of the wide, crisp stalks I sense the warm breeze and incessant chatter of bird-song. Gareth and Deri have finished harvesting and carry their crates of vegetables to the nearby Share-Shed⁵⁸ to begin the process of weighing-out for members; Fiona and I remain in the field with another regular volunteer who has joined us. Fiona insists that we harvest some squash in a separate part of the field, although she doesn’t appear to have a clear idea of which ones to cut. When we return to the Share-Shed with our late harvest it is apparent that most of the squashes

⁵⁸ See figure 11

should have remained in the field to mature into the winter months. I feel frustrated and depressed that we have been so incompetent

30th August 2012

I attended the growing site at COCA with the foremost intention of interviewing Fiona but after a relatively short period Fiona concludes the interview so we can both take part in picking crops for the members' veg-share: 'Fiona abruptly closes the interview'. Within a mere couple of minutes my role of researcher is supplanted and succeeded as I step out into the growing field to become one of several participants in the weekly harvest. Ethnography is generally considered to be a 'messy' process (Feagan and Henderson, 2009), comprising 'many untidy (and sometimes disappointing) but vital experiences (of fieldwork)' (DeLind, 1999:9). Luttrell claims that '(a)t its core, ethnographic research is creative, inventive, emotionally charged, *and uneasy*' (2000:517, my italics). I frequently experienced insecurity and dissatisfaction that I was not noticing important facets of my case studies, or focussing on the 'wrong' aspects.



Figure 12: The COCA Share Shed

Source: the author

Ethnography has also been subject to broader criticism; it is claimed that ethnography can resemble 'mere idiosyncratic impressions' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:6). Ethnographic texts risk being conflated with memoirs, merely comprising 'a personal literary activity'

(Davies, 1999:92). Positivist researchers state that ethnographies do not fulfil the scientific requirements of reliability, validity and generalisability: results can't be reproduced by someone else; the data may not be valid; and findings can't be applied as universal theories (ibid). However, Hammersley and Atkinson maintain that social phenomena cannot be portrayed in a literal fashion and that it is impossible for researchers to get 'into direct contact with reality' (2007:12). They argue that meanings are unstable and cannot be ascribed to individuals whose own accounts of their actions are effectively 'the constitution of subjectivities through language' (ibid:13). Furthermore, Hammersley and Atkinson claim that all research is socially constructed, including natural science, its scope being defined by which 'paradigmatic suppositions' researchers apply to their studies (ibid); they assert that all scientific knowledge is mediated through the socio-historical position of the researcher, and the methodology and language they choose to employ.

3.5.1

Grounded Theory

I analysed my research material using a variation of the 'data interrogation' of Grounded Theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). According to Hutchison et al., '(g)rounded theory is a systematic yet flexible methodology, designed to assist with the development of substantive, explanatory models grounded in relevant empirical data' (2010:283). In an ongoing, iterative process data are simultaneously collected, analysed and written up (Creswell, 2003); in an earlier section I discussed how the process of analysis began with recording field-notes in my Research Diary and selectively transcribing interviews. Hutchison et al. claim that '(g)rounded theory attempts to move qualitative enquiry beyond descriptive studies, into the realm of explanatory theoretical frameworks (2010:291). The concept was originally proposed in the late 1960s by two American sociologists called Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967). The process consisted of rigorous and explicit coding and memo-making to produce theories derived inductively from the emergent data, or grounded in the evidence. In this context, theories are 'a valuable outcome of, not precondition for, research' (Hammersley, 1998:9).

However, since its inception, Grounded Theory has broadly bifurcated into two schools: Glaser remained close to the original concept whilst Strauss, in collaboration with Juliet Corbin, developed the methodology to include consideration of appropriate, discipline-based, prior knowledge and theory (Tavory and Timmermans, 2009) (*see figure 13*). Yin describes this revised approach as 'a general analytic strategy' derived from reviewing the relevant literature to posit questions and critically analyse the data (1998:251). However, Tregear has cautioned that some case studies in AFN research appear to have a 'primarily demonstrative role' and 'that empirical material becomes a confirmatory adjunct to a pre-determined argument' (2011:11).

Ryan and Bernard observe that ‘*apriori*’ understandings can also be derived ‘from local, commonsense constructs; and from researchers’ values, theoretical orientations, and personal experiences’ (2003:88). Consequently Fetterman contends that ‘(t)he ethnographer enters the field with an open mind, *not an empty head*’ (2009:1, my italics). In this study I have adopted the latter interpretation of Grounded Theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) to develop the major themes of my discussion chapters:

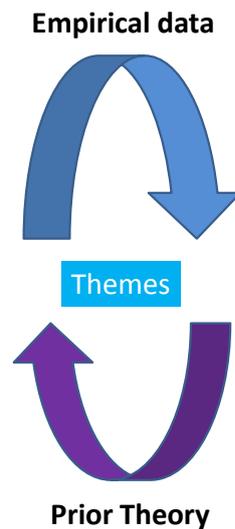


Figure 13: The iteration of Grounded Theory combining empirical data and prior theory (after Strauss and Corbin, 1990)

Therefore I initially scoped literature on CSAs originating predominantly from North America to review prior knowledge and theory. During my participant observation I started to identify common themes and, in a recursive process combining data with theory, I returned to the literature to develop these themes that subsequently became the organising principles of my three results chapters. In the following section I describe the process of analysing my empirical data.

3.5.2

Data analysis

Schiellerup maintains that he ‘found data analysis a bit of a black box during my PhD. It appeared to be something that happens, somehow, by mixing analytical approach (e.g. grounded theory) with data (e.g. field notes, transcripts) and technology’ (2008:164). Ryan and Bernard also express confusion: ‘(t)heme identification is one of the most fundamental tasks in qualitative research. It also is one of the most mysterious’ (2003:85). The authors contend that researchers at the outset of analysis ‘are most concerned with identifying *as wide a range of themes as possible*’ (ibid:95, my italics). This exploratory process of identifying multiple

themes is known as ‘*open coding*’ (Corbin and Strauss, 1990); Hawkins and Maurer refer to these initial codes as preliminary themes (2010). Open coding facilitates the ordering of very large amounts of data into manageable concepts in the form of categories and sub-categories (Strauss and Corbin, 2008) that are conceptually and empirically grounded in the data (Kitchin and Tate, 2000; Mason, 1996).

The function of open coding is to identify key elements such as repetitions, similarities and differences, missing data, indigenous typologies or categories, and commonly used metaphors and analogies (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). Corbin and Strauss state that ‘events/actions/interactions are compared with others for similarities and differences and gradually themes, or conceptual labels, emerge’ (1990:12). For example, Nelson et al. analysed data that they collected at community food initiatives in south-western Ontario: ‘social capital was not a finding we were looking for; rather, *it emerged from the data* and was impossible to ignore’ (2013:575, my italics). I had also not considered social capital as an *apriori* code until it began to recur as a category in my data analysis.

The process of coding ‘is the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain these data’ (Corbin and Strauss, 1990:46). According to Thompson and Coskuner-Balli, ‘(t)he interpretation of the data set unfolds through a process of dialectical tacking in which provisional understandings are formed, challenged, revised, and further developed through an iterative movement between individual transcripts and the emerging understanding of the entire set of textual data’ (2007a:140); Tavory and Timmermans state that ‘grounded theory employs theory to construct a grammar of social life’ (2009:243). The ultimate aim is to ‘build a theoretical explanation by specifying phenomena in terms of conditions that give rise to them, how they are expressed through action/interaction, the consequences that result from them, and variations of these qualifiers’ (Corbin and Strauss, 1990:9).

As the iterative process of my data analysis deepened, I rationalised and consolidated individual codes into dominant themes that were emerging from the data. The agglomeration of codes under key themes, or concepts, is referred to as ‘*axial coding*’ (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Hutchison et al. state that ‘(t)he purpose of axial coding is to begin the process of reassembling data that were fractured during open coding... initial codes are scrutinised to ascertain how some of the identified categories relate to one another and to the overall phenomenon’ (2010:291). Therefore separate codes that I identified such as ‘Barriers to membership’, ‘Class’, ‘Communities’, ‘CSA demographics’, ‘Members’, ‘Motivations’, ‘Outreach’, ‘Social Inclusion’, ‘Sustainable Communities’ and ‘Yuppie Chow’ became amalgamated under the discursive rubric of ‘community’. Consequently, whilst I do not claim to make a ‘theoretical

explanation', the results chapters reflect dominant themes that are theoretically grounded in the empirical data that I collected.

From the outset of my research, 'community' appeared axiomatic and particular to CSA and forthwith presented itself as a focus of research. My ethnographic methodology permitted me protracted access to both communities of my case studies. Community is an under-represented element of CSA in academic literature as few researchers have immersed themselves in CSA communities to the extent that my research methodology allowed⁵⁹. Despite holding *a priori* assumptions about community, the meaning and extent of CSA community was not revealed to me until I began to collect empirical data that challenged and extended my knowledge. During my analysis it became apparent that social capital was also a key component of the communities I was studying and was instrumental in effecting the functioning of the CSA communities at many different levels and scales. Consequently I incorporated 'Social Capital' and 'Community' that had previously been separate themes to form Chapter 4: *Community and Social Capital*.

When I began scoping CSA literature, 'moral economy' also appeared to form a significant constituent of this model of agriculture based on face-to-face relationships, shared risk and mutuality. However during the course of my fieldwork the moral economy of CSA presented itself in many different contexts such as: the difficulties of operating an ethical enterprise in a market economy; diverse visions for the projects amongst its founder members; and conflicting and contradictory expectations of CSA subscribers. These individual concepts were not apparently unified under the single thematic heading of 'moral economy' until my analysis had developed and was validated after several months of fieldwork. Whilst this range of concerns is present in the literature of CSAs, they are rarely framed in terms of a moral economy, with the exception of Galt (2013).

Consolidation of themes is said to occur when '*theoretical saturation*' has been reached (Hutchison et al., 2010). Theoretical saturation occurs when data collection and analysis no longer initiate fresh theoretical insights or new categories (Charmaz, 2006). Towards the end of my fieldwork I recorded the following observation:

⁵⁹ For exceptions, see Charles (2011); DeLind (1999); Lagane (2015) and Nost (2014)

Excerpt from Research Diary #5:

Tonight has felt like a rather laborious interview and I'm noticing that I'm finding it difficult to come up with new ways to tackle the issues. I conclude I must be reaching some kind of theoretical saturation, although I think this only applies to the subscriber category of my interview participants. On the one hand this feels pleasing and denotes an identifiable moment of progress and achievement, although it is also tinged with some sadness as it signals that I am closing some part of my research path as time marches inexorably on

27th November 2012

Hutchison et al. claim 'that there must be evidence of theoretical density or depth to the observations presented, resulting in the presentation of a theory from which hypotheses can be generated' (2010:299). When I had concluded the interview I refer to above I believed I had reached a theoretical density regarding key themes relating to CSA subscribers. Welsh maintains that the dominant themes can be applied to re-code the empirical data as a means of checking for validity (2002). For example, in my data analysis it became clear that separate elements of the evidence I collected were all related to a moral economy of CSA and I was able to re-apply this theme to the empirical data to verify my findings. In their study of post-hurricane survivors, Hawkins and Maurer were able to verify the validity of their coding by triangulating the results of five separate researchers (2010).

My final dominant themes of 'Viability' and 'Capacity' became amalgamated as a single chapter as the two themes were ultimately indivisible: the viability of my two case studies was, in part, dependent on the capacity of those who were responsible for their operation. Latterly, in the process of writing-up, I incorporated 'Sacrifice' as a key theme, as opposed to an evidential sub-heading, because it was indicative and explanatory of the two aforementioned themes.

Whilst Treasurer at one of my case studies I was afforded a rare insight into the commercial aspects of CSA; I also served on the Veg-Bag Marketing Sub-Group responsible for the initial launch of the veg-share at my other case study. Therefore I was uniquely placed to observe the economic considerations of running the schemes and, in my role on both executive bodies in conjunction with my research responsibilities, I frequently had cause to reflect on my own capacity as an individual. Consequently, Chapter 6: *Viability, Capacity and Sacrifice* is, to some extent, the most biographical of the results chapters in this thesis. Viability and capacity are also the most represented themes on CSAs in academic literature (Brown and Miller, 2008; Galt et al., 2016; Polimeni et al., 2006a&b; Silva et al., 2015; Tegtmeier and Duffy, 2005).

3.5.3

Using software for data analysis

Schiellerup maintains that '(o)rganising, interpreting and writing up qualitative data is a lengthy and exhausting process' (2008:167). In order to address the complexity and volume of my qualitative research material, I employed an NVivo software programme during the collation, organisation and analysis of my data. According to Crowley et al., NVivo 'is generally regarded as being one of the more sophisticated qualitative analysis packages' (2002:194). The software is useful for ordering a large data base and facilitates the flexible and efficient retrieval of separate items (Creswell, 2003). Bringer et al. maintain that NVivo obviates 'the chaotic task of photocopying, cutting, highlighting, and filing interviews and coding by hand' and allows the researcher to conduct complex searches of the data (2004:248). However, it cannot be regarded as a substitute for analysis, per se (van Hoven, 2003). Welsh argues that the software should be used 'mainly as an organising tool' (2002:7). During my research I used NVivo to store and organise literature and data but I did not undertake any of the advanced search or modelling functions of the software that permit different forms of preliminary analysis.

Some researchers contend that the use of software can dictate the style and content of data analysis (Crowley et al., 2002). Schiellerup argues that 'one may find oneself inappropriately socialised by the 'agenda' inscribed in the software' (2008:168) and Welsh suggests that it 'can result in the "wrong" kind of analysis taking place' (2002:7). Crowley et al. cite concerns with *data loss* 'involved in putting data into the computer and about the abstraction that occurs once the data are in the computer' (2002:193). Arguably, however, choices of material and how data are categorised and depicted is a function of the researcher's decisions, rather than the specific organisational tool that is employed. Bringer et al. contend that NVivo demands that '(t)he researcher must still interpret, conceptualize, examine relationships, document decisions, and develop theory' (2004:249). Therefore, whilst it became apparent during the process of analysis that certain themes in my data were recurring, the themes assumed importance according to conscious decisions that I made to prioritise the significance of certain portions of the data. As a corollary, other researchers may have drawn different inferences and conclusions from the same data set; Schiellerup describes this process as 'leaving all the theses that could have been written behind in favour of 'this one'' (2008:169).

Following Bringer et al. (2004), the following screenshots are taken from my personal computer to illustrate how I organised research material using the NVivo software:

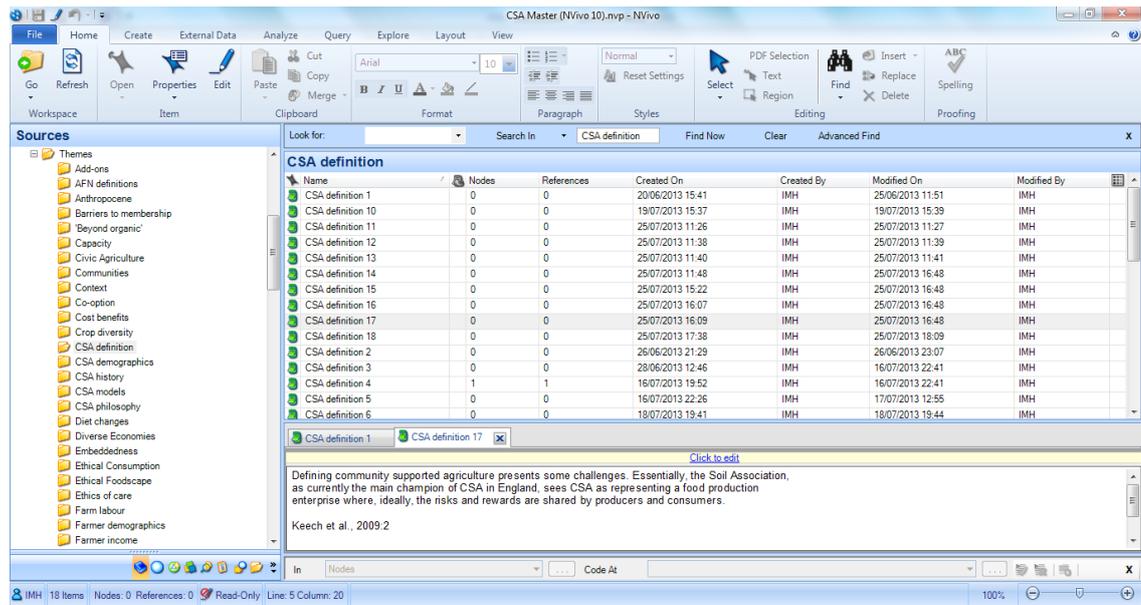


Figure 14: NVivo as a tool for organising literature

During the course of scoping CSA-related literature in the early phases of my PhD research, I routinely collected written material in NVivo (see figure 14). I organised the literature according to categories that I believed would hold relevance to my thesis. Some categories (in Sources in the left-hand column) were macro-scale, such as ‘Ethical Consumption’, whilst others were more specific and indicative such as ‘Crop diversity’ or ‘Farmer income’. The example given above (‘CSA definition’ in the second column across) shows numerous definitions of CSAs that I collected predominantly from academic journals and subsequently edited and incorporated into the text of my thesis⁶⁰. Other categories that I collated such as ‘Anthropocene’ or ‘Farm labour’ were never included in my write-up. However, categories such as ‘Community’ and ‘Capacity’ became the dominant organising principles of my substantive results chapters. Consequently, this process of collecting literature formed the initial stages of establishing categories, or codes, which, according to the interpretation of Grounded Theory that I applied, were either corroborated by the empirical data collected during my fieldwork, or were subsequently discarded as irrelevant.

I also organised literature in a separate software programme called Endnote:

⁶⁰ See Chapter 1 for a definition of Community Supported Agriculture (p.4)

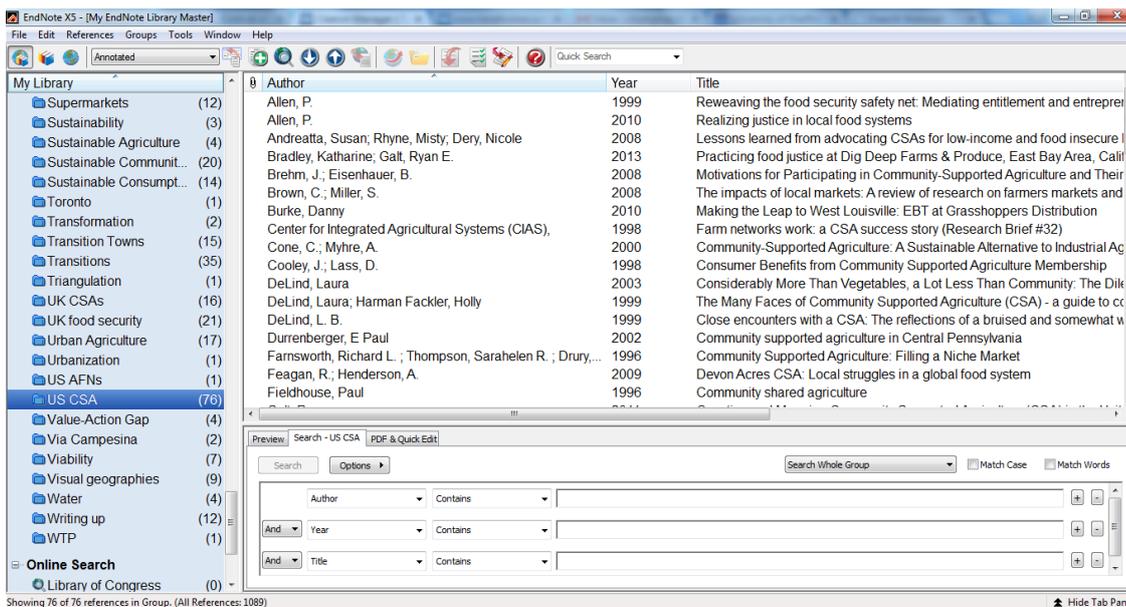


Figure 15: Endnote as a tool for organising literature sources

Endnote is a bibliographical programme that, in particular, facilitates the importation of references from academic e-journals but can equally be applied to create a reference for any form of research material, such as book chapters, conference proceedings and internet pages and blogs. I classified the literature sources I collected under a higher level of category, or heading, than the codes I employed in NVivo, and the categories were generally descriptive rather than abstract, such as ‘US CSA’, ‘Supermarkets’, or ‘Transition Towns’ (see figure 15). As before, some of this literature such as ‘Supermarkets’ assumed less importance during the course of my data analysis than ‘Viability’, for instance, that subsequently became another defining descriptor of one of my results chapters. Therefore the headings under which I organised literature in Endnote were complementary and correlative to the categories that I created in the literature section of NVivo.

I used the NVivo software to store all forms of other data that I collected from my case studies such as email communications, events flyers, newsletters to CSA subscribers, and minutes from monthly executive meetings. I sometimes annotated these entries with my own observations and I also kept a Research Diary as separate memo entries in NVivo. I used the coding stripes function of NVivo extensively, both to code data such as interview transcripts and to interrogate relevant literature. NVivo software allows the researcher to highlight sections of imported text according to a particular category:

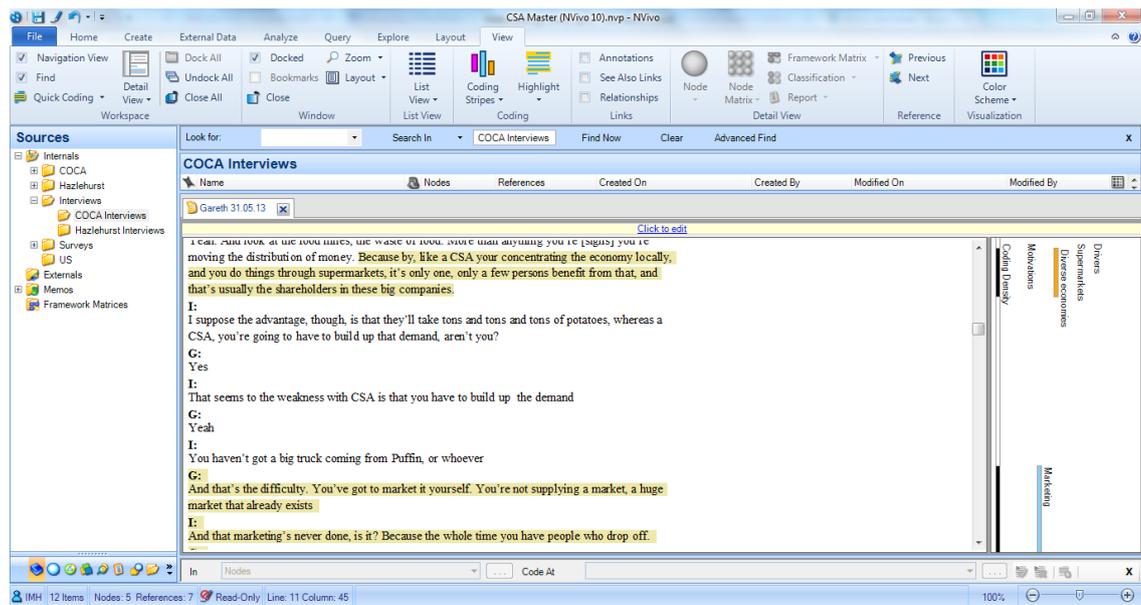


Figure 16: Using the coding stripe function of NVivo to identify concepts in data and literature

I identified categories throughout the data and literature that I allocated to a 'node', in the terminology of NVivo. The different nodes, such as 'Diverse economies' or 'Marketing', are highlighted in the chosen text in NVivo and are represented by a coloured stripe at right-angles in the far right-hand column (see figure 16). According to Hutchison et al., coding stripes 'facilitate the task of comparing categories and concepts... (w)e used coding stripes to provide a visual overview of how the nodes created (emergent concepts) might relate to one-another' (2010:292). In this respect I mobilised the nodes, or coding stripes, as a basis to conduct axial coding to cluster different nodes around significant and dominant recurrent concepts, or themes, which subsequently formed the theoretical basis of my three results chapters: *Community and Social Capital; Moral Economy; Viability, Capacity and Sacrifice*.

In the previous sections I have described how I collected, stored and analysed my data. I outlined how I used open coding to identify commonalities that I subsequently consolidated into major themes through the process of axial coding. I recounted how I confirmed the validity of these dominant themes by re-applying them as codes to the original data. However, Clifford has stated that '(e)thnographic truths are... inherently *partial* - committed and incomplete' (1986:7, original italics). The author describes ethnographic texts as 'writing reduced to method', their representation through writing claiming to be transparent reflecting the immediacy of experience, a simple exercise of transcribing the observable 'facts' (ibid:2).

However, Denzin maintains that it is not possible to 'presume to be able to present an objective, noncontested account of others' experiences' (1997:xiii). DeLind has stated that: 'I think there is a need for us to recognize *the subjectivity of our work* and for us to express it as best we can. Far from being an admission of deficiency or weakness, it is an expression of engagement, of

being alive and human' (1999:4, my italics). In this sense, notwithstanding the rigour that I have attempted to apply to my data analysis, this account of my two case studies is equally partial, partisan and incomplete. Furthermore, Tornaghi and Van Dyck contend that '(m)aking a comprehensible analysis of "a movement" in the making is quasi-impossible as its agenda and strategy evolve continuously' (2015:1260).

3.6

Conclusions

In this chapter I began by depicting my methodological position and why an ethnographic approach was appropriate to this study. I then provided a justification and description of the case studies I chose in order to address my central research question: *What is the potential of Community Supported Agriculture to promote resilience and contribute to transition in the UK?* I detailed my research methods of participant observation and semi-structured interviews that I used to gather my primary data. I reflected on my positionality and reflexivity as a researcher and the benefits and drawbacks of the research methods I employed. I then outlined my theoretical approach to data analysis enlisting Strauss and Corbin's (1990) interpretation of Grounded Theory. Finally, I described how I stored, organised and analysed the data that I collected during the course of my fieldwork; and how I developed and verified the thematic and theoretical organising principles of my three results chapters.

My three results chapters are organized as follows: Chapter 4: *Community and Social Capital* traces the multiple meanings and scales of *community* in Community Supported Agriculture applying the lens of *social capital*; I distinguish CSA communities as *place* and *interest-based*; describe how CSAs are socially embedded and networked, and discuss the limitations of CSA community and social capital. In Chapter 5: *Moral Economy* I outline *structural*, *moral* and *operational* tensions inherent in social enterprises such as CSAs that function within the mainstream economy yet propound non-market values; I examine how CSA values intersect with pragmatic financial considerations that I situate along a *functional/collaborative* continuum. I develop these themes in Chapter 6: *Viability Capacity and Sacrifice*, when I discuss human capital, or *capacity*, and forms of personal *sacrifice* undertaken by the CSA membership in order to consider the *viability* of CSAs.

Chapter 4: *Community and Social Capital*

4.1

Introduction

It has been argued that *community* is axiomatic to the composition of Community Supported Agriculture (Pole and Gray, 2012); McIlvaine-Newsad et al. assert that '(c)ommunity and community building are essential elements of the CSA philosophy' (2004:152) whilst Brehm and Eisenauer claim that a strong and vigorous community is 'an important variable in both the conception and application of CSA' (2008:95). Furthermore, community is arguably what distinguishes Community Supported Agriculture from conventional globalised agriculture and may contribute to the transformative potential of the concept. Hinrichs observes that: '(g)iven its community overlay, CSA is often represented as a particularly *transformative* direct marketing institution' (2003:39, my italics). Consequently in the early stages of my research I identified the concept of 'community' as a dominant theme. Both of my case studies emphasised community as a core value; at Hazlehurst: '(w)e are motivated... to engage everyone within our communities in the transition to a sustainable and resilient society'⁶¹ and COCA aimed to '(g)row a community around the project based on shared work, social activity and a spirit of friendship'⁶². In this chapter I examine three aspects of CSA community: what *community* means in the context of my case studies; how communities of Community Supported Agriculture are manifested; and the limitations of CSA community at my case studies.

In concert with *community*, I mobilise the concept of *social capital*. I select social capital as my framework of analysis because it is useful in differentiating the behavioural elements of CSA which are the focus of this ethnographic study (Pelling and High, 2005)⁶³. Nelson et al. claim that social capital comprises 'the relationships that connect people to each other and can help enable them to develop trust, forge a shared identity, organise around common values, and engage in collective action'(2013:572), such as the formulation and execution of a Community Supported Agriculture project. Sonnino and Griggs-Trevarthen have observed that 'the generation or enhancement of *social capital* is the most fundamental motivation behind *community food* and other *social economy* initiatives' and that 'this process is not just what allows community food initiatives to emerge; *it is also what allows them to remain sustainable over time*' (2013:285, my italics). Furthermore, Dale and Newman contend that '(t)he ability to turn social capital into action can be viewed as a group's agency', to effect local change, and

⁶¹ Excerpt from "It's happening in Heeley!: Hazlehurst CSA Co-operative"

Source: <http://heeleyonline.org/2010/09/08/hazlehurst-community-supported-agriculture-co-operative/>

⁶² Excerpt from the Memorandum and Articles of Association of Caerhys Organic Community Agriculture

⁶³ I discuss how my case studies generated *financial capital* in Chapter 6

wider socio-technical transformation (2006:19). In this chapter I demonstrate how the *social capital* of significant individuals facilitated and created community agency and social resilience in the context of my case studies.

I begin this chapter by briefly reviewing the complex and contested concept of *community*. I then draw on the methodology of Firth et al. (2011) who conducted research at two Community Gardens in the UK. Firth et al. used the concept of *social capital* to consider ‘the nature and construction of “community” in community gardens’ (ibid:555). The authors employed a three-part typology of social capital comprising *bonding*, *bridging* and *linking* to categorise their case study gardens. I employ this typology to examine how the community of CSA is materialised and discursively constructed. Firth et al. also proposed that their study communities could either be identified as *place*-based or *interest*-based, or a hybrid of both. Drawing on Peters and Jackson’s model of overlapping communities (2008), I argue that CSAs are simultaneously *place*-based and *interest*-based communities that are constituted at different spatial scales from the neighbourhood to the global.

The empirical portion of this chapter is divided into three sections: firstly I provide a detailed description of the concept of community as it relates to both of my case studies; I argue that the CSA participants comprise a blend of *place*-based and *interest*-based communities. I demonstrate the finite social capital of the CSA projects and how the resilience of my case studies was affected by differing levels of community participation. In the following section I outline how the community of CSA was reproduced through more extended *interest*-based networks of social capital; I maintain that social capital is brought directly to the project by participating individuals in the form of *personal resources*, and is facilitated by participants in relation to extended social networks for the benefit of the CSAs. I argue that these expansive networks strengthen the resilience of my case studies in particular, and the social movement of Community Supported Agriculture in general. Finally, I describe the narrow social composition of my case studies and outline strategies that were employed at each CSA to broaden participation in the projects. I maintain that the transformative potential of CSA is constrained by the social homogeneity of its membership.

4.2.1

The concept of community

Community is a highly contested concept in theory and practice (Jewkes and Murcott, 1996) and ‘carries with it a quite heavy baggage of idealist connotations’ (Lindkvist, 2005:1193). Firth et al. state that ‘(c)ommunity is a notoriously difficult concept to define’ (2011:556) and Jewkes and Murcott portray ‘definitional tangles and contortions’ in their attempt to seek an

interpretation (1996:557). The sociologist George Hillery identified ninety-four definitions of community and claimed that there were more besides his analysis; the only factor common to each definition was people (1955). Barrett maintains that the concept of '(c)ommunity is now so widely invoked that cross-disciplinary confusion seems to be the order of the day' (2015:182) and Hamalainen and Jones refer to community as 'an empty concept with so many meanings, (that) it has been stretched beyond any real usefulness' (2011:1). For the purpose of analysing of my two case studies, I follow Moseley's (2003) definition whereby a community is a social grouping of '*people sharing and interacting with a common purpose*' (cited in Firth et al., 2011:557, my italics). However, this simplified definition of community elides some of the internal contradictions and complications of community dynamics which I explore later in this chapter.

Cohen described communities as *aggregational* and *relational* (1985), the former consisting of a grouping of people who have something in common that distinguishes them from other groups, and *relational* on account of one group's distinctiveness from another. Therefore Cohen argues that communities coalesce around shared values that position or bound, them as different from others. Raymond Williams described community as a 'warmly persuasive word' that is always inferred to be positive (1976:76) but other authors have argued that community can be a site of division, inequality and exclusion (Crow and Maclean, 2000). Writers such as Julie Guthman (2003) and Patricia Allen have argued that the alternative food movement, including projects such as CSAs, are inherently exclusive 'arranged along already familiar lines of class, ethnicity and gender' (2010:301). In the final section of this chapter I consider the social composition of my case studies and describe attempts by the executive body of one of my case studies to create more permeable boundaries with the neighbouring communities.

It has also been suggested that the concept of community has been appropriated as a political tool of neoliberal retrenchment, or 'rolling-back' of the state (Andrée et al., 2015; McClintock, 2013; Pudup, 2008). Authors such as Cameron et al. argue that the concept of community has been advocated by right-of-centre governments 'to foster characteristics like individual responsibility, self-reliance, self-help and self-improvement' as the state increasingly devolves financial responsibility for less advantaged stratum of society to the Third Sector and NGOs (2010:2). Liepins refers to this trend as a 'socially insidious and costly (ab)use of the concept of community' (2000:29) and Aitken describes the resultant ventures as 'limited-liability communities' comprising 'social relations based on efficiency and the contractual obligations of capitalist society' (2009:222). Consequently, it is argued that the concept of community has become 'a de-politicized fuzzy notion' (Pratt, 2007:288) than can be reactionary as well as progressive, cutting across all political persuasions (Aitken, 2009; Gibson and Cameron, 2001).

There is also a body of literature exemplified by Robert Putnam's seminal treatise "Bowling Alone" that depicts community in decline (2000). Putnam argues that societal trends such as suburbanization, lengthy commutes, dual careers, longer working hours, and dependency on television as a form of entertainment have resulted in the fracturing of communities leading to diminished engagement in civic institutions (1995; 2000). Post-structuralist authors also cite macro-level homogenising forces such as globalization, detraditionalization, market forces and capitalism, and transportation and communication revolutions as responsible for disembedding and dissolving communities (Beck, 1992; 1997; Giddens, 1990; 1994). Bauman describes this fragmentary condition as 'an individualized, privatized version of modernity' (2000:9) and Barrett depicts society as 'a wasteland of individuation and anomic malaise' (2015:184). However, Obach and Tobin have argued that local food initiatives such as CSAs can restore and revitalise social networks and levels of civic engagement (2014). In this chapter I discuss how social capital was reinforced at both of my case studies.

Communities have also been defined as *place*-based or *interest*-based: Peters and Jackson describe this as a 'common sense' understanding - grounded in the practical realities of day-to-day life' and claim that it is 'utilised by many theorists and practitioners alike' (2008:5). Communities are either defined by their proximity (shared *place*) or according to their commonalities (shared *interests*) such as religion, specific practices, or particular needs (Blay-Palmer, 2011). A separate literature frames communities as 'communities of practice', in respect of learning sustainable practices communally (Bradbury and Middlemiss, 2015; Ingram et al., 2014), and cultivation of food practices in particular (Campbell and MacRae, 2013; Friedmann, 2007). Barrett states that '(c)ommunity has an intrinsic association with place' (2015:182) and Catney et al. maintain that 'face-to-face contact remains an important part of social life' (2013:512). However, authors such as Ben Anderson have argued that communities are increasingly disembedded and 'imagined', coalescing around shared ideas and beliefs rather than situated in a specific place (1991). Therefore communities can be conceived of as 'networked individualism' (Wellman, 2001) diffused and dispersed across geographic space, a process that authors argue has accelerated and intensified with the advent of the internet and social networking (Barrett, 2015; Catney et al., 2013). In this chapter I will demonstrate the social ties within my case studies and how they are also connected to broader communities of CSA through network technologies.

According to Peters and Jackson, *place* and *interest*-based communities are 'linked temporally, spatially, physically and psychologically in a wide range of ways from a world community scale down to very small groups of individuals' (2008:6). In this chapter I will suggest that it is

possible to conceptualise CSA as a series of nested communities that operate at different scales from the local to regional, national and global (see figure 17).

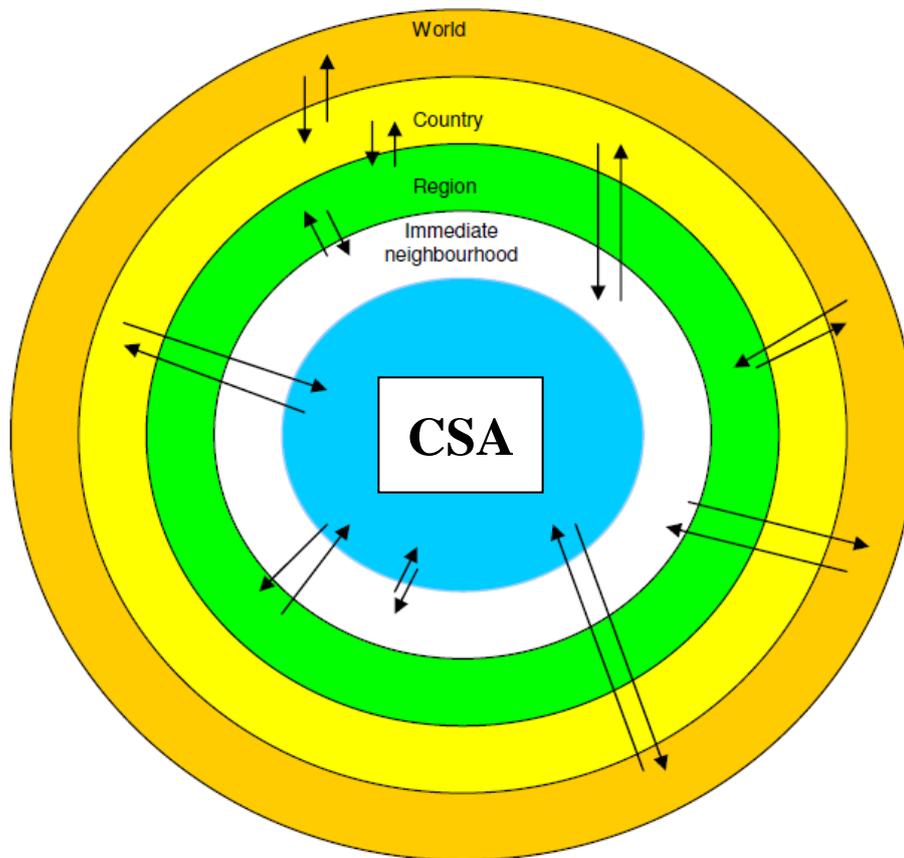


Figure 17: The interaction of CSA communities across different spatial scales (adapted from Peters and Jackson, 2008:6)

Peters and Jackson’s model ‘points to the reality that the communities people belong to are multiple and overlapping’ (2008:6). Therefore the interactions at each scale can be proximate in space (*place*-based) or they can consist of inter-connected imagined communities (*interest*-based) because, according to Catney et al., ‘different definitions and ideas of community can coexist’ (2013:512). Cox et al. contend that whilst CSAs can be regarded as a situated entity, ‘they might also be or become parts of wider AFN, or alternative food systems, functioning at larger scales’ (2008:204). According to Blay-Palmer et al., these networks could ‘foster the development of bridging and bonding capital within and between community and regional food initiatives’ (2016:39). In the course of this chapter I utilise Peters and Jackson’s model of overlapping communities to demonstrate the scope of *place* and *interest*-based communities that comprise my CSA case studies, communities that range from the scale of neighbourhood to global. Peters and Jackson state that ‘interactions between communities (and any ‘new’ communities that emerge as a consequence) will be constructed as a hybrid outcome of people’s

previous socialities and histories' (2008:6). I will describe how the 'previous socialities and histories' that were brought to the case studies by their participants comprised and conceived social capital within the CSAs.

4.2.2

Social capital

Social capital, like community, is another concept that defies easy categorisation. Szreter and Woolcock refer to social capital as 'one of the 'essentially contested concepts' of the social sciences' (2004:654) and Pelling and High maintain that 'the closer one gets to it the more slippery it seems to be' (2005:310). For the purpose of my analysis, I draw on Szreter and Woolcock who refer to social capital as 'the nature and extent of the impact of social relationships' (2004:650) and Woolcock and Narayan who describe it as 'the norms and networks that enable people to act collectively' (2000:226). In Chapter 6 I outline how *human capital*, or *capacity*, affected the functioning and resilience of my case studies and how each of the CSAs was also influenced by inputs of *financial capital* such as grant funding. Despite the multiplicity of styles and arguments, Burt argues that 'social capital is a metaphor about *advantage*' (2000:346, my italics). In this chapter I describe the advantages that different forms of social capital conferred on my CSA case studies.

According to Portes (1998), the concept of social capital originated with sociologists such as Pierre Bourdieu (1980; 1986) and James Coleman (1988; 1990) who defined social capital as benefits accruing to individuals or families according to social ties. Subsequently, though, in what Portes has referred to as a 'conceptual stretch' (1998; 2000), authors such as Robert Putnam (1995; 2000) have applied the idea of social capital to the benefits accrued to the community *as a whole*. Hawkins and Maurer argue that the concept of social capital 'is unique in its ability to bridge the theoretical gap between *individual* and *community* that spans from the *micro* to the *macro* in an interactive and independent manner' (2010:1779, my italics). In the context of my case studies I will employ the concept of social capital in relation to individuals *and* communities.

Szreter and Woolcock (2004) also draw a distinction between social capital as *networks* or *resources*. Authors such as Putnam (2000) argue that social capital consists of the connections between actors in an extended network whilst others such as Burt (2000) argue that social capital consists of the social resources held by individuals. Szreter and Woolcock conceptualise this distinction as the difference between the 'wires' (network) and the 'electricity' (social resource) (2004). According to the authors, 'social capital must be the property of a group or a network' because the 'network is crucially premised on its participants having shared norms of

reciprocity - and these must be a trans-individual and group property' (ibid:655). It is this interpretation of networked social capital that I will apply to my case studies in this chapter. However I will also refer to the social capital that was specific to individual participants and that was decisive in extending the networks of social capital that each CSA benefitted from.

In the same manner that community is generally invoked positively (Williams, 1976), social capital is also frequently implied to be constructive and beneficial. However, just as community can be exclusive and bounded, so social capital can heighten and crystallize social divisions. In the context of Colombian gang culture, Rubio has described 'perverse social capital' that recreates and reinforces undesirable social relations resulting in a progressive cycle of discrimination, nepotism, clientelism, corruption, and organised crime (1997). Callaghan and Colton additionally note that, apart from being potentially exclusionary, social capital can also impose conformity on individuals leading to the suppression of opinions and agency, and it can promote 'unproductive 'group think'' that stifles innovation and fresh approaches to chronic situations (2008:935). Consequently Woolcock and Narayan refer to social capital as 'a blessing and a blight' (2000:226).

Kirwan et al. assert that food acts 'as a social agent that builds assets at a community level' (2012:46) and Hudson states that 'many CSAs have fostered social capital among their members' (2005:7). For the purpose of using the concept of social capital as a framework of analysis of my case studies, I follow Firth et al. (2011) who refer to social capital collectively as 'membership of a network and a shared set of values' (ibid:558); I draw specifically on the authors' three-part typology of *bonding*, *bridging* and *linking* social capital:

Bonding social capital is defined as strong ties between individuals in similar sociodemographic situations, such as immediate family, close friends or neighbours

Bridging social capital is used to describe more distant ties of like persons, such as loose friendships or workmates. *Bridging* social capital tends to be outward looking and brings together people from across diverse socio-demographic situations

Linking social capital concerns connectivity between unlike people in dissimilar situations. It refers to connections with people in power, such as those in politically or financially influential positions

ibid:558 (my italics)

By employing Firth et al.'s three-part typology of social capital I demonstrate the combination of individual and community assets that comprised the *bonding*, *bridging* and *linking* social capital of my case studies. This framework allows me to conceptualise CSAs as different types of interactions, at differing scales, between different kinds of communities. Glowacki-Dudka et al. suggest that each of the three types of social capital is important to the success of local food systems such as CSAs (2013). They argue that *bonding* capital is the 'lubricant' or the 'glue' between farmers and consumers; that *bridging* capital promotes networks amongst similar projects; and that *linking* capital connects the movement to policy and funding opportunities. Glowacki-Dudka et al. state that '(w)hile high social capital may not guarantee success, low social capital can doom cooperative efforts' (ibid:79). In this chapter I will demonstrate how, and to what extent, each of the three forms of social capital applied to my case studies.

Pelling and High have argued that social capital is important to the concept of community because it 'offers ways into understanding the role of fundamental social attributes that contribute towards building capacity' (2005:317). In the context of community initiatives that address climate change, the authors suggest that '(t)he balance between bridging, bonding and linking capital in a social system can help in our understanding of the direction and speed with which adaptations unfold' (ibid:310). Each of my case studies can be considered to be a direct response to climate change reflecting their origins in Transition Heeley-Meersbrook and St Davids Eco-City Group. Nelson et al. in their study of local food systems in south-western Ontario argue that social capital can be regarded as an indicator of 'the scale and range of the projects' successes, and the depth of participants' involvement with them' (2013:568). Therefore the vitality, and transformative potential, of both of my CSA case studies can be understood in terms of the presence and combination of different forms of social capital.

Pelling and High assert that the 'bonding/bridging/linking triplet has become a mainstay of social capital' (2005:310). However they caution that the apparent clarity of this typology can obscure the detail of social relations and that social capital has 'a dynamic and contextual quality through time and in response to external and internal stressors' (ibid:311). I observed this phenomenon repeatedly at my case studies as individuals, who had a significant impact in terms of social capital, either arrived or departed from the CSAs. Each case study was also dependent on access to grant funding that, to some degree, relied on the social capital of those that participated as I shall describe later in the chapter.

The empirical section of this chapter is divided into three sections: firstly I give a detailed description of the concept of community in the context of both of my case studies. In the following section I outline how community was reproduced through more extended networks of social capital; and finally I describe those who were excluded from community at my case

studies, and strategies that were undertaken in an attempt to include unrepresented sectors of the local community. I consider how the community and social capital of my CSA case studies contributes to the transformative potential of Community Supported Agriculture.

4.3

CSA as community

At COCA these participants articulate their impression of community at the CSA:

Really it's one of the best projects we've ever done on this farm; it's given this farm a future. It's brought the community spirit onto the farm and you're not alone as a farmer trying to struggle against the market any more
excerpt from promotional video: Caerhys Organic Community Agriculture - COCA

source: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vO1MgKvHbuM>

I feel I'd rather give the time here because, you know, it, it's not just individual gain, it's sort of, community gain, I suppose

Debbie, COCA

Fieldhouse claims that CSA 'is more than a simple producer-consumer relationship, but rather a collective effort to provide food whilst building community' (1996:43). Press and Arnould maintain that 'CSA creates a place where individuals can connect with each other' (2011:182) and Schnell has argued that CSA is 'a powerful geographical idea, because it promotes the formation of local connections, direct ties between people and the farmers and landscapes that sustain them' (2007:550):

Regular farm open days and social events encourage a sense of community and connection with the land. We like to involve members in the life of the farm, whether it is planting onions, picking carrots or just popping down for a cup of tea and a chat

source: <http://www.coca-csa.org/about-us/how-does-coca-work/>

Lapping asserts that 'CSAs are local in the most essential sense and how they are organized and how they operate reflects local realities and local conditions' (2004:145); Feagan argues that food localization projects can be regarded 'as forms of resistance to the complex *detrterritorialization* paths of modernity, and the larger structural drivers which devalue the various meanings inscribed in our lived worlds – worlds *lived in place*' (2007:30, original italics); he continues that 'there is an almost visceral urgency to reterritorialize space in the efforts of LFS⁶⁴ advocates, practitioners, writers, and consumers' (ibid:38). Feenstra claims that

⁶⁴ Local Food Systems

‘they tend to be place-based, drawing on the unique attributes of a particular bioregion and its population to define and support themselves’ (2002:100). Schnell describes this countermovement as ‘neolocalism’, of which CSAs comprise ‘an increasingly important part of *place-creating* narratives’ (2013:624, my italics).

However, DuPuis and Goodman caution against the romanticism of unreflexive localism: ‘if global is domination then in the local we must find freedom’ (2005:361) Critical geographers such as David Goodman have argued that the reification of the local obscures ‘social processes and relations of power that produce, reproduce and restructure the scale of the local’ (2004:5). Brown and Purcell state that ‘no scale has any inherent and eternal qualities... scales are socially produced through political struggle’ (2005:610). Therefore, as Jarosz observes, ‘(l)ocal food systems may employ industrialized production techniques, exploit farm workers and still produce organic food’ (2008:233); for example, Weiler et al. describe the exploitation of interns and migrant workers in Canadian AFNs (2016). Brown and Purcell also assert ‘that scale is fundamentally a *relational* concept’ as the region is embedded within the nation that is also part of the global (2005:610, original italics). Therefore, according to Levkoe, ‘the local and global are understood as mutually constitutive levels of social organisation – local is not seen as an alternative to globalisation, but as an intrinsic part of it’ (2011:697).

Allen and Wilson claim that ‘(a) sense of place can develop a consciousness of linkages and a positive integration of the global and local’ (2008:538) and Feagan argues that ‘we are reflexively and dialectically tied to many and diverse locals around the world’ (2007:23). Sonnino and Griggs-Trevarthen maintain that ‘“local” here is a *social* (rather than territorial) notion. Informed and shaped by ideals of ‘involvement’, ‘networking’ and ‘commitment’ (2013:287, my italics). It is this relational, nested concept of ‘progressive localism’ (Featherstone et al., 2012) that I adopt in this chapter as I discuss the spatially extended, networked communities of CSA that my two case studies belonged to at different, inter-related, scales.

Andreatta et al. suggest that CSA can facilitate social cohesion: ‘(families) broadened their friendships to include their food providers – the farmers and the volunteers who delivered the CSA shares and the people with whom they shared their food’ (2008:135). Sharp et al. also suggest that CSA can be a favourable means of re-establishing social connections between farmers and those who consume their produce (2002). Kloppenburg et al. assert that local food initiatives such as CSA ‘can be one vehicle through which we reassemble our fragmented identities, reestablish community, and become native not only to a place but to each other’ (1996:34). Both of my case studies emphasised community as a core value in their mission statements that featured prominently on their respective websites:

Caerhys Organic Community Agriculture (COCA) is an agricultural scheme run for and supported by, the local community. COCA members or 'sharers,' grow and share delicious organic food, in partnership with local farmers

source: <http://www.coca-csa.org/welcome/>

Hazelhurst Community Supported Agriculture Co-operative Ltd (CSA) aims to reconnect Sheffield people with where their food comes from by growing organic fruit and vegetables with the help of the local community for the local community on a beautiful rented site of just over an acre in south Sheffield. We are running a veg box scheme and are selling directly to local communities. Hazelhurst CSA provides a direct link between the production and consumption of food. We want to create a mutually supportive relationship between local growers and local communities

source: <http://hazelhurst.coop/>

My case studies both convey the mutual constitution of the projects by the growers and the community: 'run for and supported by, the local community' and 'with the help of the local community for the local community'. The intention of each mission statement was to instil an understanding of the *bonding* social capital that is central to the philosophy of both case studies. The principle of cohesion is reinforced by the use of terminology such as 'relationship', 'partnership', 'support' and 'share'. Laura DeLind maintains that these adjectives are used repeatedly to describe the concept of CSA (2003).

In the context of the CSA that she helped to establish, DeLind explains how '(v)egetables were the "calling card" to bring local residents to an active awareness of each other' (1999:4). DeLind's CSA scheme in Michigan was typical of most of the original CSAs in North America, conceived along what Pole and Gray describe as 'communitarian farming ideals' whereby farmers and consumers are constitutive of a mutually supportive community (2012:85). At Hazelhurst a participant that I interviewed referred to the CSA as "community-based resourcefulness"⁶⁵ and at COCA one of the Core Group members described the scheme as "a great social experiment"⁶⁶. Farnsworth et al. have argued that CSA members specifically derive satisfaction from participating in a social experiment (1996). However, Pole and Gray maintain that the founding vision of communitarianism is substantially idealised and that '(f)armers and managers are more often than not farming alone without the support of community' (2012:98). Cone and Myhre have characterised the tension between the individual subscriber and the

⁶⁵ Interview with Gerry, Hazelhurst

⁶⁶ Comment made by the COCA Chair during the introduction to the COCA Annual General Meeting, 2012

collective entity of CSA as ‘the centrifugal inclinations of members and the centripetal tendencies of community’ (2000:189).

Many authors in North America support this analysis (Cone and Myhre, 2000; Lang, 2010a; Ostrom, 2007): ‘(t)here is, curiously, little interest on the part of most members to use the farm or local food production as a venue or catalyst to build community’ (DeLind, 2003:198).

According to DeLind, members are most likely to join a CSA ‘to obtain fresh vegetables; to protect the environment; and to support a farmer’ (ibid). There is also evidence that cultivating and maintaining the community component of CSA creates an additional burden for the growers and the executive bodies who are responsible for the functioning of the scheme (Hinrichs and Kremer, 2002)⁶⁷. At COCA a member of the Core Group was concerned that the grower and other volunteers were failing to accomplish essential agricultural tasks in order to prioritise social activities:

Ian:

And he had the harvest event that year as well, didn't he?⁶⁸

Maddy:

Yessss [exasperated], the Harvest Party which took a whole week to prepare for [laughs]

Ian:

That was Gareth's idea, wasn't it?

Maddy:

Yes [gaily], again another of Gareth's ideas, right in the middle of the busy season, late September, you know, everyone was drawn off just like last year, the same thing again, everybody spent a whole week preparing for the Harvest Party when they should've been harvesting

⁶⁷ In Chapter 6 I describe in greater detail how bonds of reciprocity and obligation between CSA members imposes a range of demands on participating individuals such as organising social events

⁶⁸ See figure 17



Figure 18: Making preparations for the annual Harvest Party at COCA (note the affiliation to the GM Free social movement)

Source: the author

Cone and Myhre (2000) state that, although belonging to community was not a primary motivation for subscribers to join a CSA, *bonding* social capital was nurtured through membership and Hudson concurs that ‘long time members do cite their appreciation for bonds that have been made between members’ (2005:9). Veen et al. made similar findings in Community Gardens in the Netherlands stating that participation ‘contribute(s) to the development of social cohesion – even if people are not particularly driven by social motivations’ (2015:1). Pole and Gray observed that the lowest-income members of a CSA were most likely to indicate meeting like-minded individuals as a reason for joining; they speculate that higher-income households are already embedded in social networks ‘and perhaps are less dependent on elements of CSA to garner a sense of community’ (2012:95). In their study of a CSA in Scotland, Cox et al. also noted ‘that interaction with other subscribers can be an important source of information about issues, events or products. Information does not just flow between the grower and consumers but amongst consumers too’ (2008:214). Therefore subscribers to the scheme developed *bonding* social capital between themselves in the setting of the CSA.

Brehm and Eisenauer suggest that social connections amongst members ‘are not perceived as vital because they duplicate existing ones’ (2008:112). Hazlehurst and COCA both overlapped and replicated the membership of the projects that they originated from to an extent that these previous groups were subsequently superseded as the CSAs developed and absorbed the energies of the limited number of individuals who participated:

Well, it, what’s interesting is, the, erm, the, that was a very energetic time for Heeley Meersbrook Transition Group, um, and then, I think there’s a crucial thing, some of the most active people then took on the Steering Group for setting up the CSA and didn’t do anything more for the whole Transition movement

Sasha, Hazlehurst

Ian:

And the Eco-City had been going for years?

Maddy:

Yes, it had been going for years and years and it’s now fallen apart because everybody who was even remotely active in Eco-City is now joining COCA

The examples of Hazlehurst and COCA both demonstrate that the CSA communities were coincident and concomitant with previously existing groupings and therefore didn’t necessarily realise new *bonding* social capital within their membership. As Peters and Jackson suggest, individuals’ membership can be multiple and overlapping and new forms of community are often hybrid versions of previous incarnations (2008). The overlapping communities of CSA and their precedents also imply that human capital was a limited resource that I shall discuss in greater detail in Chapter 6.

Jacques and Collins describe ‘a spectrum of enthusiasm and support’ for participating in CSA activities and events ranging from those who merely pay their subscription (‘low end’) to others, like myself, who accept a role on the executive body (‘high end’) of the CSA⁶⁹ (2003:32). It is also possible to infer a ‘middle’ category of individuals who subscribe to a veg-share but also attend events and undertake tasks associated with vegetable production such as volunteering at the growing site (*see figure 19*).

⁶⁹ See Chapter 3 for a fuller discussion of my role on the executive bodies of both of my case studies during the course of my ethnographic fieldwork

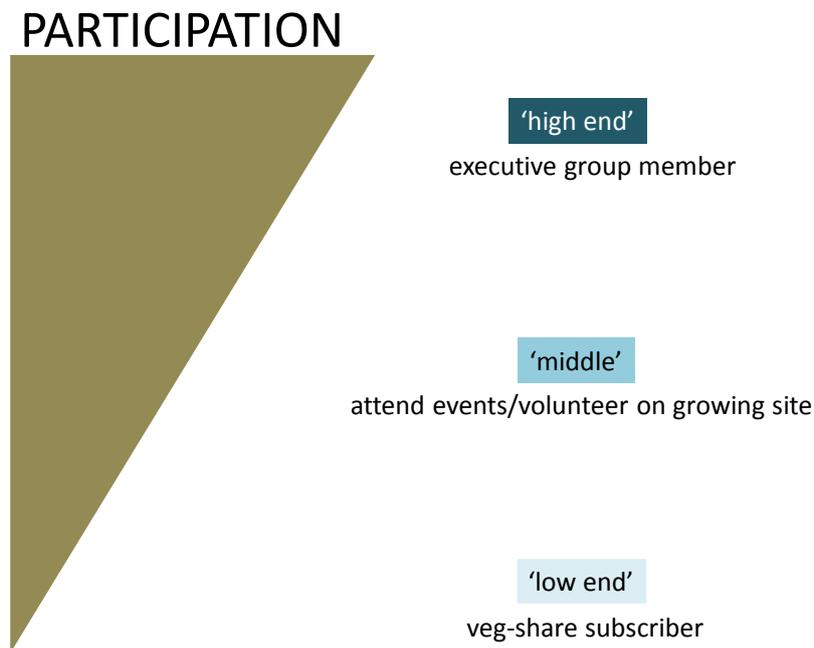


Figure 19: The spectrum of member participation in CSA
(adapted from Jacques and Collins, 2003)

During my ethnographic fieldwork I observed a range of degrees of member participation in the community aspects of my case studies; the following two members of the CSA executive bodies articulate how they perceived aspects of community within the projects as a palpable attraction:

Yeah, we pretty much grow our own food, which is, you see when Hazlehurst first started off we didn't really want to get involved because we, we didn't need any veg 'cos we, 'cos we grow all our own anyway but we've just, sort of, been drawn in by the community aspect of it, really

Keith, Hazlehurst

I don't know it just, I was enthused by other people's enthusiasm, I suppose, and it, sort of, rubs off on you, doesn't it?

Debbie, COCA

Despite their reservations, Keith and Debbie are drawn to participate because they recognise the potential of experiencing the social capital of *bonding* with other members of the CSA community: 'we've just, sort of, been drawn in' and 'it, sort of, rubs off on you'. Chen, who observed one of the first CSAs in China in Beijing, maintains that CSA promotes social capital for members on three levels: by encouraging communication between family members; between

friends who are members; and between members who are strangers (2013). Many participants at my case studies commented on the social aspect of membership:

I like the company, I like, err, um, I like bumping into people when I'm picking my vegetables up

Elaine, COCA

Well, I think it's got an important sort of social and glueing mechanism for the community. It's a joint endeavour and people get an awful lot out of doing something, this is my observation, about doing things together with a purpose [emphasises]

Becky, Hazlehurst

Becky's language accentuates the bonding component of belonging to a CSA: 'it's got an important... glueing mechanism' and she highlights the social benefits that accrue to members: 'people get an awful lot out of doing something'. The *bonding* social capital that members derive is a function of participating in a common cause and is contingent with Putnam's analysis of social capital as a function of networks (2000).

The following new member at COCA had formerly subscribed to an organic veg-box from a commercial supplier that operates across the UK. Sue compares her previous experience of receiving a veg-box on her door-step to collecting her veg-share from the farm where COCA is situated:

(W)e are more involved [emphasises] in it because we have to be because we have to go and see where it all is and to meet the people, and, you know, other people who are picking up their veg, you know, it's a nice community activity in way, get to speak to Gareth and see how it's all going and that's all, it's very positive and it feels we're more connected to the place

Sue, COCA

Sue emphasises the sociality of her visits to the farm: '(w)e are more involved' and 'it's a nice community activity'. In the following excerpt from an online newspaper Pete who also subscribed to COCA explains to a local reporter why the CSA scheme is attractive:

“We absolutely love it,” he said. “We get fantastic vegetables and salads every week that have 10 times the flavour of supermarket produce, plus zero food miles.

But it’s more than that to us; it’s about getting a genuine feeling of community. My kids are learning about where food comes from, how to grow it, and how to work together”

excerpt from: ‘St Davids community farm group enjoy the fruits of their labour’

source:

<http://www.westerntelegraph.co.uk/news/localnews/stdavids/11143839>.
[St Davids community farm group enjoy the fruits of their labour/](#)

Pete is enthusiastic about his veg-share and its ecological footprint⁷⁰ in terms of reduced food miles but he stresses: ‘it’s more than that to us; it’s about getting a genuine feeling of community’. DeLind argues that CSA members ‘are buying a set of relationships... which *add value* to the vegetables’ (2003:197, my italics). In Chapter 5 I discuss the additional, non-monetary, values that members ascribe to CSA.

Even members who had misgivings about other aspects of the scheme such as the quality of the vegetables and chose to leave were enthusiastic about the social dimensions of the scheme:

I have enjoyed the community spirit and greatly enjoyed the social events.

Best wishes

Claire

email from lapsed COCA subscriber to the Membership Secretary

However, as Jacques and Collins’ model implies (*see figure 19*), other members of my case studies were not inclined or able to participate in social activities and events:

I’m interested in it but I work full-time, I work more than full-time [emphasises], you know, and I just haven’t any time for really community, er, er, er, organisations, unfortunately, apart from the odd bit of, I dunno, signing petitions [laughs]

Gemma, Hazlehurst

I’m not that involved. I mean I just buy the veg-bags. That’s my only involvement

Cheryl, Hazlehurst

⁷⁰ van Dooren and Bosschaert (2013) have employed the term ‘foodprint’ to refer to the ecological footprint determined by food consumption and personal dietary choices

Cone and Myhre studied membership participation in CSAs in Minnesota and Wisconsin over an eight-year period; they concluded that “community” for a great many referred more to community of *interest* than to community built on mutual relationships of rights and obligations, on reciprocity’ (2000:196, my italics). They argued that members were committed to the philosophy of CSA as evidenced by their loyalty to renew their annual subscription, even though the researchers observed low participation amongst members in social events. Russell and Zepeda also studied a CSA in Wisconsin and produced findings that were consistent with Cone and Myhre: ‘(i)t seems that Troy CSA members glean utility from a *conceptual community of interests*, rather than a community based on an actualized network of relationships’ (2008:143, my italics).

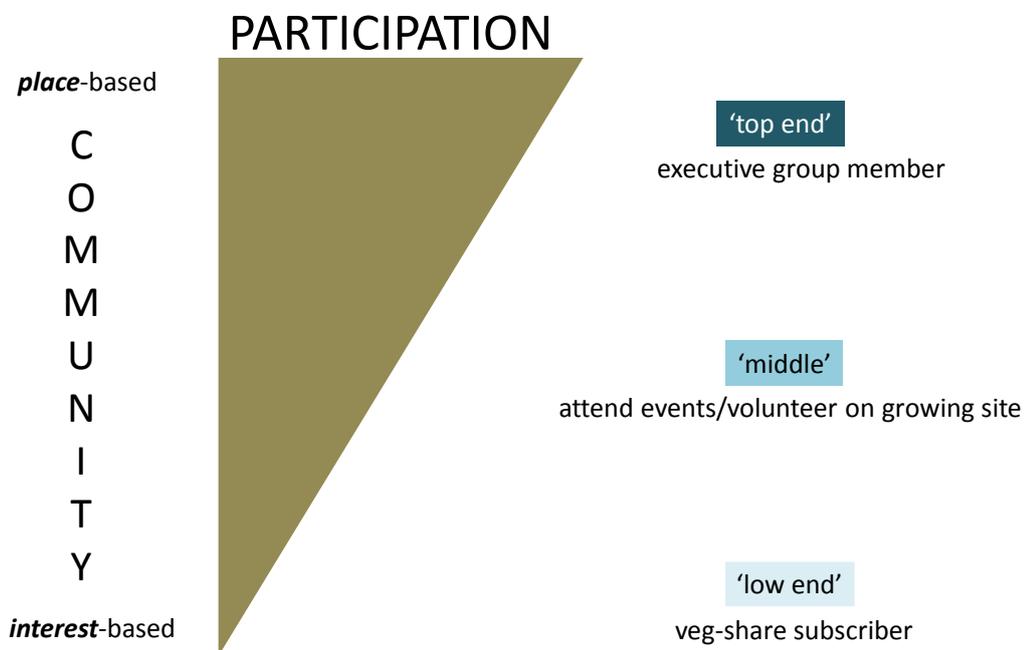


Figure 20: The spectrum of member participation in CSA as a function of place-based or interest-based community (adapted from Jacques and Collins, 2003)

Therefore, it is possible to represent members along a continuum of *interest*-based or *place*-based community, depending on the extent of their participation (see figure 20) (Firth et al., 2011). Those members who share the ethics of CSA but don’t, or are unable to, participate in social occasions or assisting with the horticulture of CSA can be characterised as an *interest*-based (‘low-end’) community (Cone and Myhre, 2000; Russell and Zepeda, 2008). These subscribers appear to share the ideals and philosophy of CSA but don’t inhabit or frequent the geographical *place* of CSA: ‘I’m interested in it but I work full-time’. In the UK, Keech et al.

studied an orchard CSA that offers apple and pear subscriptions to distant members portraying it as ‘a *community of interest*, rather than of locality’ (2009:2, my italics). At the ‘top end’ of the spectrum, members share the *interests* but are also embedded and embodied in the *place* of CSA through their participation in activities such as volunteering on the executive bodies or assisting at the growing site.

In their study of two CSAs in south-east England, Ravenscroft et al. have suggested that members who participate at the ‘top-end’ of the spectrum may be using their roles to undertake a ‘new, transitional identity formation... attempting to realize a larger self-related identity project’ that aligns with their personal ecological and political beliefs (2013:629). Therefore, contrary to DeLind (2003) and Guthman (2008b) who argue that CSA is merely an elitist *consumption* choice, Ravenscroft et al. contend that, in their role on the executive bodies or as volunteer growers, members at the ‘top-end’ of the spectrum are also committing themselves as ‘active co-producers’ to new modes of *production* (2013). I return to these themes in Chapter 5 when I outline how founder members of my case studies identified themselves with different ethical positions regarding *governance* and *permaculture* and in Chapter 6 I discuss the extent to which individuals commit themselves to, and co-produce, CSA projects.

Ravenscroft et al. describe CSAs as ‘people coming together out of choice to achieve collectively what they could not have achieved individually’ (2012:5) and Cone and Myhre argue that by ‘adapting their lifestyle and renewing their membership, they formed a “community of common interest”’ (2000:196). Therefore CSAs can be characterised as *interest-based* communities belonging to a wider social movement comprised of, and connected by, social capital. Lacy has referred to projects such as CSAs as ‘empowered communities’ (2000) and Cox et al. claim that ‘CSA can be understood to create spaces within which radical social and environmental agendas can be established and the capacity to realise them can grow’ (2008:206). Welsh and MacRae contend that ‘(f)ood, like no other commodity, allows for a political awakening, as it touches our lives in so many ways’ (1998:241). This participant at Hazlehurst articulates how he conceives of the CSA as a form of political commitment:

Being an organic farmer is such a direct action because you're capturing carbon with the organics in the soil

Richard, Hazlehurst

Richard perceives his participation in Hazlehurst CSA as a form of ‘direct action’ against climate change because growing crops in the field captures atmospheric carbon from the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide. Scott-Cato and Hillier claim that initiatives such as CSAs can be perceived as a means to ‘solve political problems by micropolitical community processes,

rather than via normal, macropolitical channels' (2010:879); Weatherell et al. depict CSA participants such as Richard as members of 'neo-tribes' based on specific food-related interests or concern' (2003:243). In this context, 'community' is seen as a level that exists somewhere between the micro (or, individual) level, and the macro (governments and corporations)' (Aiken, 2012:90). Follett distinguishes between weak and strong alternative food networks (2009). Follett argues that strong alternatives, such as CSAs, redistribute wealth to farmers through direct selling relationships; foster trust with transparent production processes; and create new spaces of market governance by using novel distribution channels such as veg-shares. However, Follett asserts that even strong networks 'are not overtly political' arguing that they 'concentrate on consumer decisions that *indirectly* lead to political change through lifestyle changes' (ibid:37, my italics).

Other authors have taken a more critical stance arguing that Community Supported Agriculture is merely another arena of atomised and privileged consumer choice, rather than a vehicle of social change (DeLind, 2003; Guthman, 2008c). This attitude was reflected by the comments of some CSA members that I interviewed:

I'm just your bog-standard consumer, really [laughs]

Cheryl, Hazlehurst

Another subscriber at Hazlehurst also revealed her detachment from the political dimensions of the project:

Well, I wouldn't say I know much about it. I know it's a scheme for looking at transitions, it's tied into the transition stuff, isn't it?

Gemma, Hazlehurst

Consequently DeLind argues that 'CSA is more about managing personal lifestyle than it is about challenging existing economic and political institutions' (2003:202) and Guthman maintains that 'what passes as politics these days is done through highly individualized purchasing decisions' (2008c:1171). According to Busa and Garder, 'there is a growing sense that local agriculture, like organic agriculture before it, is being promoted as a *practice of consumer conversion* (buying different things) rather than as a project of contestation and systemic political challenge to the status quo' (2015:324, my italics). Therefore Cox et al. assert that 'CSAs are neither inherently radical nor inherently successful' (2008:206) and Goland observes that '(a)n individual may enter a CSA as an act of resistance or as a savvy consumer' (2002:23).

However, I encountered members of my case studies who did demonstrate an awareness of CSA

as a conduit of political and social change:

(I)t's the right thing to do, so in a very small way, it's ethically correct, it makes you feel like you're doing something to contribute and you feel, there's a certain amount of doing the right thing, even though it may be completely ineffective, you start to do the right thing

Becky, Hazlehurst

(I)t's the concept [emphasises] that I think is absolutely brilliant, the idea, err, everybody connecting together to produce food, to me is just brilliant

Fiona, COCA

Later in this chapter I will explain how, as collective entities, my CSA case studies were connected to broader *interest*-based social movements that were inherently and explicitly political in their objectives.

At both of my case studies there were specific *interest*-based communities: at COCA there were more than a dozen individuals that did not receive a veg-share but maintained their membership subscription as a pledge of support for the scheme⁷¹. Some of these members of COCA were distant from the CSA setting but had been enlisted through social connections associated with other members; therefore their membership can be regarded as a function of extended *bonding* social capital. At Hazlehurst a community share offer was made to raise capital to fund the activities of the CSA (see figure 21):

Hazlehurst Community Supported Agriculture Share Offer

You are invited to participate in an exciting community enterprise that aims to reconnect Sheffield people with where their food comes from.

Hazlehurst Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) provides an opportunity to help fund a local, not-for-profit organisation. It aims to grow and sell organic vegetables to local communities and businesses and engage with the wider community through events and volunteering opportunities. The CSA is based in the Moss Valley, 4 miles south of Sheffield city centre. The CSA is looking to raise finance to fund its activities by inviting people to purchase shares in the CSA. Shares will not entitle their holder to any dividend, but buying them would help to fund the CSA's activities, and in time a modest return on the shares may be paid in the form of interest.

Amount sought £30,000
Launch Date 2nd February 2012
Closure Date 30th April 2012
Minimum investment £50



Figure 21: Excerpt from Hazlehurst CSA share offer document

⁷¹ Annual membership of the scheme cost £24.00 in addition to the weekly cost of the veg-share

Consequently there was also a community of local investors comprising almost fifty individuals most of whom didn't receive a veg-share but participated in the share offer to express their support and interest in the scheme. It is possible to conceptualise these extended CSA communities schematically according to Peters and Jackson's (2008) model of interaction (see figure 22):

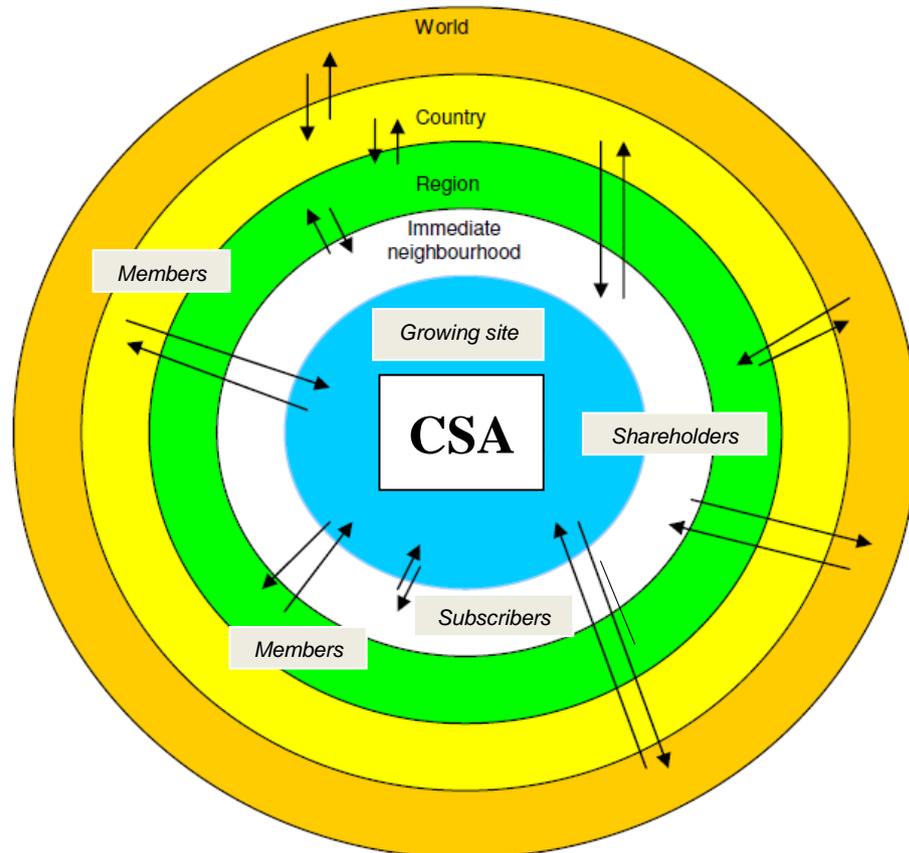


Figure 22: The interaction of CSA participants across different spatial scales (adapted from Peters and Jackson, 2008:6)

In the preceding section I have shown how CSA members can be identified as belonging to *place*-based or *interest*-based communities, according to their degree of participation. I now illustrate how members, and non-members, were encouraged to participate in social events at my case studies, thereby contributing to *bonding* and *bridging* social capital of the CSA communities.

4.4.1

Community events

The sociologist Michael Carolan has described CSA as '*event-full*' food (2011:50, original italics). One of the chief mechanisms that each of my case studies employed to stimulate the

creation of social capital was a series of social events. Some of these events were intended to develop social cohesion within the existing CSA community and can therefore be regarded as an effort to create *bonding* social capital:

Hazelhurst Social evening. There will be a Hazelhurst social meet-up on Wednesday 20th June at the Rutland Arms (86 Brown St, S1 2BS) This is now a regular event on the 3rd Wednesday of the month
It's for anyone who is involved and/or interested in Hazelhurst to get together for a drink and a chat.

Food is available, and any time from 7pm is likely to find some of us there.
Come and join us!

excerpt from Hazlehurst Newsletter No.9: June 2012

These regular meetings were intended to encourage existing members to socialise, or bond, in a setting that was separate from the activities and surroundings of the growing site: 'to get together for a drink and a chat'. I attended Hazlehurst Social Evenings at the Rutland Arms when up to fifteen people attended. However other events were specifically designed to attract a wider community with the intention of recruiting new members and can thus be considered as attempts to promote *bridging* capital.

During the COCA Harvest Party (*see figure 23*) visitors were given the opportunity to take a tour of the growing site and there was a prominent display of the veg-share scheme with promotional material and membership forms. However, as this member of the Core Group relates, the CSA was not immediately effective at cultivating *bridging* social capital:

(W)e haven't been very good at directly getting the new members who were at the Harvest Party because we haven't been getting contact details from anyone on the door

Ben, COCA

Ben describes a failure on behalf of the Core Group to capitalise on the potential of bridging to a wider community. At the Harvest Party during the following year visitors were encouraged to sign a contact sheet as they entered the event. This became an 'interested list' of individuals who subsequently received details of other forthcoming events and the COCA Newsletter. At COCA the Harvest Party was the most successful event to bridge to a wider community when as many as two hundred people attended. However there were many other events held at the farm during the course of the year such as Scarecrow Making, a Farm Forage and Cook-Up, Making a Cob Oven, Basket and Willow Weaving, a Cycle Re-Cycle Workshop, Bread Making, a Harvest/Cook/Garden Party, Pickling/Preserving, and a Bonfire Night. Although all of these

events were publicised to the local community as well as COCA members, a discount was offered to subscribers to the CSA scheme. The Chair of the COCA Core Group described this as “adding value to membership”⁷²; this concession can be interpreted as an incentive to create *bonding* social capital between members. In Chapter 5 I discuss other non-market values that were integral to my CSA case studies.



Figure 23: Poster advertising Harvest Party event at COCA

Similar events took place at the growing site at Hazlehurst; according to one Management Committee member, social events were about “trying to make it enjoyable, fun and creative”⁷³. Therefore unpopular tasks such as removing invasive couch grass were transformed into outdoors concerts as members were joined by a musical quartet on the field whilst they weeded (see figure 24):

⁷² Field notes from COCA Core Group meeting held on 23th April 2013

⁷³ Interview with Sasha, Hazlehurst



Figure 24: Flyer advertising Hoochie Couchie Weeding Day at Hazelhurst

The mundane and unattractive task of weeding couch grass was translated into an unusual and appealing social event through the addition of a musical quartet at the growing site. Although the presence of the musicians can be construed as an inducement to engage volunteers for the weeding task, the musical accompaniment also encouraged participation and social interaction and, therefore, can also be understood as a means of cultivating *bonding* social capital between CSA members who, otherwise, might not have attended the event.

In the previous sections I characterised the community of my CSA case studies as *interest*-based and *place*-based, depending on the degree of commitment from members to participate in activities relating to the social and economic reproduction of the projects. Some subscribers participate in the growing *place* of the CSA by attending events or assisting with the horticulture of the scheme; other subscribers restrict their *interest* to receiving a veg-share. Another group of members materially invest in the concept of CSA through their annual membership fees or by purchasing shares in the scheme but they do not subscribe to a veg-share. I maintain that the resilience of the CSAs depends on a cohort of dedicated members who share the *interests*, or ethics⁷⁴, of Community Supported Agriculture but are also embodied in the *place* of CSA by participating in activities such as tasks related to vegetable production and distribution, and attending social events. However, those members who confine their *interest* to receiving a veg-share, or paying membership fees without receiving a veg-share, also contribute to the economic resilience of the schemes.

⁷⁴ In Chapter 5 I describe the ethics of Community Supported Agriculture

Using the analytical framework of *social capital*, I depicted how members perceived of and appreciated community aspects of the case studies and the *bonding* social capital that they derived from participating in them. The social events at both CSAs were intended to create social capital that can be characterised as *bonding* or *bridging*, depending on whether events were intended for the benefit of existing members of the CSA, or to appeal to the wider community. These social activities were intended to strengthen the resilience of the schemes by being attractive to current members and appealing to prospective new members.

I also argued that CSA community can be conceptualised as a form of ‘progressive localism’ (Featherstone et al., 2012) that is dialectically and reflexively related and constituted at different scales. In the following section I will describe how my case studies belonged to *interest*-based networked communities that extended the ideological boundaries of the CSAs significantly beyond their geographical setting.

4.4.2

Communities of interest

In the preceding section I described how *bonding* social capital was formed at the specific locations of my CSA case studies. However, I also began to describe how some *interest*-based participants of the community are spatially extended beyond the growing sites and neighbourhoods of the CSAs, such as members of COCA who express their interest in the scheme by paying an annual membership fee without receiving a veg-share. In the following section I outline other examples of *interest*-based networks of social capital that my case studies were connected to at different geographical scales. These networks, or ‘wires’ (Szreter and Woolcock, 2004) provided access to social, intellectual and financial capital for each of the CSAs. Blay-Palmer et al. maintain that ‘sharing community-derived good practices can support and reinforce global networks of sustainable community food systems, foster knowledge co-creation and ultimately cement collective action to global pressures’ (2016:27). Wald and Hill claim that local initiatives have limited transformative potential and ‘it is only *by jumping scale* and engaging through networks that a significant challenge to the contemporary food regime might occur’ (2016:206, my italics). I enlarge my definition of CSA communities to include networks with mutual and shared interests such as sustainable communities, organic agriculture and food sovereignty. I argue that these extended communities of *interest*, or social movements, can be regarded as a combination of *bonding* and *linking* social capital which promote the transformative potential of Community Supported Agriculture.

In this first section I describe two related forms of networked communities that comprised *professional advice* and *sources of funding*. Both were critical sources of *linking* social capital

during the crucial and precarious start-up phases of my case studies and contributed to their resilience. Each of the CSAs benefitted from professional networks during their inception period. At Hazlehurst members of the Transition Heeley-Meersbrook group received advice from the Soil Association (see figure 25) on establishing a CSA:

Transition Heeley/Meersbrook

Invites you to a free workshop on

community food growing



Find out how we can set up a
Community Supported Agriculture
scheme for:

- Cheap, fresh, healthy, local food
- Hands-on practice in growing food
- Community-owned land for days out, camping and social events

 With guest speaker, Kirstin Glendinning from the Soil Association, see www.soilassociation.org/csa for the Soil Association's extensive resources on community supported agriculture.

Thursday 23rd April, 7pm

The Grapevine Centre, Northcote Rd, S2 3AT

For more information see: www.transitionssheffield.org.uk

Figure 25: Community Food Growing event at Hazlehurst led by Kirstin Glendinning of the Soil Association

The Soil Association acted as a partner in the *Making Local Food Work* (MLFW) programme led by the Plunkett Foundation⁷⁵. One strand of the programme consisted of the promotion of Community Supported Agriculture. Since 1999 when the Soil Association held a dedicated conference, it has been attempting to recruit more organic farmers to the concept of CSA (Soil

⁷⁵ 'The Plunkett Foundation helps communities to take control of their challenges and overcome them together. We support people, predominantly in rural areas, to set up and run life-changing community co-operatives; enterprises that are owned and run democratically by large numbers of people in their community'

Source: <https://www.plunkett.co.uk/about-us>

Association, n.d.,a). The Soil Association arranged a series of regional workshops in England to stimulate the growth of the CSA sector. As a consequence Hazlehurst received technical advice from the Soil Association's CSA Regional Coordinator during the course of the MLFW programme.

According to Hawkins and Maurer, '*(l)inking social capital* is the extent to which individuals build relationships with institutions and individuals who have relative power over them' such as the ability to provide access to services or resources (2010:1780, original italics). Szreter and Woolcock argue that *linking* social capital occurs when there is a steep gradient of authority between the two parties (2004). There was a pronounced resource differential in relation to Hazlehurst in their novice capacity and the Soil Association that had collected information on Community Supported Agriculture for several years and was able to fund expert coordinators in this field. Therefore I argue that this relationship can be characterised as *linking* social capital on account of the vertical power relations between the two partners (Glowacki-Dudka et al., 2013; Pelling and High, 2005).



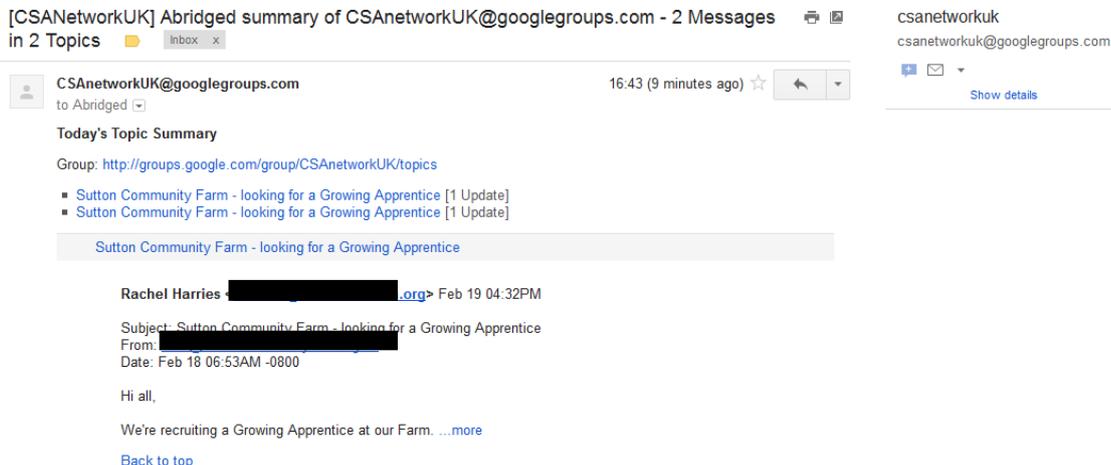
Figure 26: The conference launch of the CSA Network UK, at The Assembly Rooms, Stroud, December 2013

(Author standing to the middle left)

Source: Soil Association

The Soil Association as part of the MLFW programme also produced a range of resources for fledgling CSAs (Soil Association, n.d.,a&b; 2011a,b&c; 2012) and created an online map of

CSA projects across the UK⁷⁶. Subsequently the Soil Association and other partners initiated a UK-based network of CSAs that was launched in December 2013 (see figure 26). The purpose of CSA Network UK was to share skills and knowledge, run training events, and to create an online presence in the form of a Facebook Page and a Google Group (see figure 27).



by email to CSA Network UK members

Figure 27: A CSA Network UK Google Group communication

The email from Sutton Community Farm illustrates how dispersed, discrete CSA projects can utilise social media to share information and knowledge such as their recruitment of a grower. Newman and Dale state that ‘(b)ridging ties have value in their ability to connect actors horizontally to other groups in order to share information and build larger resource bases’ (2005:484, my italics). Galt et al. who observed CSA schemes in California noted that other CSAs ‘with direct farming experience’ were regarded as the most useful and reliable source of information ahead of NGOs such as the Soil Association (2011:26); Hassanein and Kloppenburg also identified ‘horizontal’ networks of support between farmers in Wisconsin (1995). The intention of these range of networking strategies that were established by the Soil Association was two-fold; firstly to develop *bonding* social capital between CSA projects that are geographically isolated; and, secondly, to provide *bridging* social capital by facilitating access to sources of knowledge and funding.

In the preceding section I have described how my case studies received *professional advice* through extended networks of social capital that I characterise as *linking*. In the following section I provide instances of *sources of funding* for my case studies that can also be characterised as a function of the social capital held as *personal resources* by individual case study participants that were translated into *linking* social capital for the benefit of the CSAs.

⁷⁶ See: <http://www.communitysupportedagriculture.org.uk/find-csa/add-csa/>

During my fieldwork I observed instances when social capital belonging to participants of the case studies that Burt (2000) identifies as *personal resources* of social capital assisted the CSAs to create *linking* social capital with other partners. A Core Group member at COCA was employed by a local NGO⁷⁷ that aims to promote sustainable communities in Pembrokeshire; Ben's position within the organisation was constructive in arranging a field trip to Stroud Community Agriculture⁷⁸:



Figure 28: Study trip to Stroud Community Agriculture in April 2010 funded by Planed (Author standing to the far right holding a leek)

Source: Planed

Yeah, not long after that I organised the Stroud trip⁷⁹, em, and, yeah, which was great

Ben, COCA

⁷⁷ Pembrokeshire Local Action Network for Enterprise and Development (PLANED)

‘PLANED aims to play a vital role in empowering and enabling local communities to be full and equal partners in the development of their area’

Source: <http://www.planed.org.uk/planed.html>

⁷⁸ Stroud Community Agriculture (SCA): SCA started in 2002 and is currently the largest CSA scheme in the UK with over 200 subscribers

Source: <http://www.stroudcommunityagriculture.org>

⁷⁹ See figure 27

Another member of the Core Group at COCA explains the influence of this visit on the subsequent formation of the CSA:

Having heard what they'd done at Stroud really inspired me

excerpt from promotional video: Caerhys Organic Community Agriculture -

COCA

source: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vO1MgKvHbuM>

The organiser of the study trip and COCA Core Group member concurs:

The day was immensely enjoyable and informative, with a wealth of information provided on how to start up a CSA of your own, much of which was very useful for the emerging CSA on the St David's Peninsula

posted on PLANED website

source: <http://www.planed.org.uk/wordpress/2010/05/visit-to-stroud-community-supported-agriculture/>

The social capital that was derived from this visit can be described as *linking* because it consisted of a vertical knowledge transfer that can be equated to the previously described experience of Hazlehurst and their relationship to the Soil Association. The social capital derived from this study trip was subsequently re-invested into COCA; on the basis of the visit founding members of COCA applied to Organic Centre Wales (OCW)⁸⁰ who funded a consultant from Stroud Community Agriculture to visit COCA to assist with the development of their Business Plan on several occasions. Therefore the field trip can be regarded as the foundation of an enduring relationship of *linking* social capital between the two CSA projects.

At Hazlehurst a member of the Management Committee also held a position as a trustee of the Environmental Justice Fund. Sasha's membership of this trust was instrumental in the CSA applying for funds to employ a part-time Project Manager during the first full season of its veg-bag operation. The Project Manager was responsible for overseeing the operation of the veg-bag scheme and for undertaking outreach work on behalf of the CSA; I will return to this second function of the Project Manager in the final section of this chapter when I discuss the social composition of the CSA community at Hazlehurst.

⁸⁰ 'Based at Aberystwyth University, the Organic Centre Wales (OCW) was established in 2000 as a focal point for the dissemination of information on organic food and farming to producers and other interested parties in Wales. It has since extended its focus to public education, public procurement, policy and strategy development, thus providing support to the whole of the organic community in Wales' Source: <http://www.organiccentrewales.org.uk/about.php>

At COCA a Core Group member also served on the panel of a local NGO⁸¹ that aims to support the voluntary and community sector in Pembrokeshire:

Ben:

Umm, Nick helped to write a funding application for Pembrokeshire and PAV Fund, the first that one that we got, I think he wrote, that so that was handy and, umm, he used to, you know, just come in and come to the meetings and contribute

Ian:

He wrote the first PAVS bid?

Ben:

I think so, yeah. He's also on the panel, or was, of PAVS [smiles] so that helps [laughs]

COCA received over £2000 towards the cost of their first polytunnel in this successful funding bid to PAVS. Ben illustrates the value of Nick's *personal resource* of social capital that he brought to COCA: 'that was handy' and 'so that helps'. These sources of funding that Hazlehurst and COCA received through their favourable social connections can be conceived of as *linking* social capital to financial assets. However, a final example of funding at COCA demonstrates the detrimental effects of 'perverse social capital' (Rubio, 1997) that can arise from such inter-related social networks.

COCA originated from a meeting between St Davids Eco-City Group⁸² and the farmer who owns the land where the project is based. A Core Group was rapidly created to establish and subsequently manage the operation of the CSA. The Core Group made an application to St Davids Eco-City Group for seed funding for the nascent project that was literally spent on seeds to grow the initial crop of vegetables for the first subscribers to the scheme. St Davids Eco-City Group awarded COCA £1000 at the outset of the project and made subsequent awards to fund the salary of a grower and provide static caravan accommodation at the farm for Wwoofers⁸³. However a key participant of both St Davids Eco-City Group and COCA expressed her unease regarding the close association between the two groups:

⁸¹ Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services (PAVS) supports and develops voluntary action in Pembrokeshire. It provides an interface, or working relationship, between voluntary and statutory organisations

and offers advice on funding, training and legislation
Source: <http://www.pavs.org.uk/about/index.htm>

⁸² See Chapter 3 (p.54)

⁸³ See Chapter 6 for an account of the role of Wwoofers at COCA (p.223)

(W)e're the same people, this is the trouble, and so we have actually decided, um, we shouldn't really put any more into COCA for a while, because there are other projects which should be looked at

Maddy, COCA

Maddy verbalises her concerns regarding the conflict of interest between her role on the Core Group of COCA and as a key decision-maker at St Davids Eco-City Group: '(W)e're the same people, this is the trouble' and 'there are other projects which should be looked at'. During my tenure as Treasurer, COCA made no further funding bids to St Davids Eco-City Group.

I have described how the *personal resources* of social capital belonging to individual members of my case studies such as affiliations to NGOs or membership of trusts, was beneficial to the creation of *linking* social capital at both of the CSAs. These extended communities of social capital can also be illustrated using Peters and Jackson's (2008) model of CSA interactions at different scales (*see figure 29*):

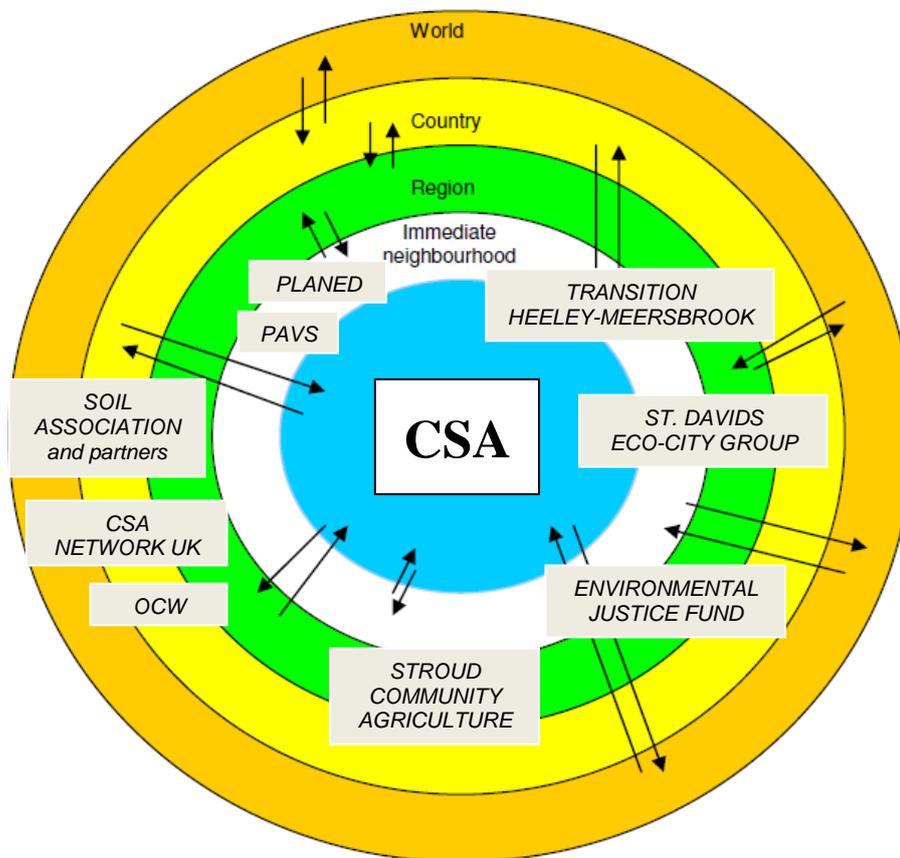


Figure 29: The interaction of CSA networks at Region and Country scales (adapted from Peters and Jackson, 2008:6)

In the foregoing sections I have described networks of *linking* social capital at regional and national levels. I characterise these extended networks as *interest*-based communities of CSA on account of their mutual interests and shared values pertaining, for example, to sustainable communities and organic agriculture. According to Schlicht et al., '(n)etworks seem to play an important role within the development of CSA-initiatives' (n.d.:71). Pratt argues that small-scale producers such as CSAs 'constitute a movement, networked with each other, with activists in other economic and social sectors in the region, and with other parts of the 'alter-globalization' movement' (2009:173). At each of my case studies the executive bodies endeavoured to create *linking* social capital with extended *interest*-based communities. Blay-Palmer et al. envisage 'an emergent, iterative cycle of networks, social capital building, knowledge creation and sharing grounded in resilient, forward gazing plans' (2016:39). I argue that the transformative potential of my case studies was enriched and enlarged by their membership of these extended networks of CSA. In this final section on extended social networks I describe *interest*-based communities of CSA than extend across the global scale.

At Hazlehurst the Management Committee was keen to recognise the CSA project as part of a global movement of food sovereignty. Like 'community' and 'social capital', the meaning of food sovereignty is contradictory and contested (Patel, 2009); Hazlehurst adopts the widely-held definition of food sovereignty as 'the right of communities to define their own food and farming systems'⁸⁴. Although the paradigm of food sovereignty evolved from the global peasants' movement of La Via Campesina⁸⁵ in 1996 (Desmarais, 2007; Rosset, 2008), Ayres and Bosia (2011) maintain that the concept has increasingly been appropriated in diverse international settings. Larder et al. who researched productive growing spaces in Australian backyards refer to 'creators and re-creators of their own version of food sovereignty' (2014:71); the authors maintain that 'small acts can be seen as part of the broader food sovereignty movement seeking to remake our food system' (ibid:56). According to Ayres and Bosia, '(f)ood sovereignty movements operate at a plurality of social and political scales, from the local grassroots, to the national and the global' (2011:60). Escobar refers to 'multi-scale, network-oriented subaltern strategies of localization' (2001:139) and Appadurai describes 'networks of globalization from below' (2001:23). Therefore Ayres and Bosia argue that CSA in Vermont can be conceived of

⁸⁴ Excerpt from Hazlehurst Newsletter: January 2014

⁸⁵ 'La Via Campesina is the international movement which brings together millions of peasants, small and medium-size farmers, landless people, women farmers, indigenous people, migrants and agricultural workers from around the world. It defends small-scale sustainable agriculture as a way to promote social justice and dignity. It strongly opposes corporate driven agriculture and transnational companies that are destroying people and nature'

Source: <http://viacampesina.org/en/index.php/organisation-mainmenu-44>

as part of the broader social movement of food sovereignty and an act of ‘microresistance to global agribusiness’ (2011:60).

In the context of my own case studies, the Management Committee of Hazlehurst chose to join the UK-based Land Workers’ Alliance (LWA)⁸⁶ to express their allegiance to the food sovereignty movement:

(W)e have been welcomed into the Land Workers’ Alliance... We see ourselves as part of the global movement for Food Sovereignty which is central to the identity of The Landworkers Alliance⁸⁷

excerpt from Hazlehurst Newsletter: January 2014

Hazlehurst’s membership of the Land Workers’ Alliance can be identified as a means of situating itself in the global community of food sovereignty and can be characterised as another form of *linking* social capital. The Management Committee also cultivated links to other community agriculture schemes across the globe:

Our Global Links

Hazlehurst CSA has links with food growing projects in other parts of the world. These include Savisthri⁸⁸ in Sri Lanka, BHASO⁸⁹ in Zimbabwe and R-Urban⁹⁰ in Paris. We share news and information on the effects of climate

⁸⁶ The Land Workers’ Alliance: ‘We are a producer-led organisation of small-scale producers and family farmers who use sustainable methods to produce food, fuel, fibre and flowers. We raise awareness of the role that our members play in providing food security, environmental stewardship, livelihoods, strong communities, animal welfare and high-quality affordable food’

Source: <http://landworkersalliance.org.uk/>

⁸⁷ The Land Workers’ Alliance is a member of the social movement La Via Campesina that represents and promotes the issue of food sovereignty globally

⁸⁸ ‘The “Savisthri” (Development Alternatives for Women) Movement has been implementing it’s programmes in Six District of Sri Lanka. These are Galle, Matara, Monaragala, Matale, Anuradhapura and Nuwara Eliya. It aims to for the uplift the poorest of poor women from the abyss they are and place them on a better footing socially, economically and politically. With this end in view we have been implementing several programmes in the Six Districts including ‘Home Gardening’

Excerpt from Hazlehurst Newsletter No.16: September-October 2013

⁸⁹ ‘BHASO’s mission is “To empower people infected and affected by HIV and AIDS by providing services that will enable them to improve the quality of their lives”. BHASO has empowered 226 households in Ward 29 who are in the process of improving the quality of their lives nutritionally and financially by viably and sustainably growing vegetables’ (Ward 29 of Masvingo Rural District some 160 km south of the ancient city of Masvingo, Zimbabwe)

Excerpt from Hazlehurst Newsletter No.16, September-October 2013

⁹⁰ ‘R-Urban is a bottom-up strategy that explores the possibilities of enhancing the capacity of urban resilience by introducing a network of resident-run facilities to create complementarities between key fields of activity (economy, housing, urban agriculture, culture)’

(R-Urban is based in Colombes, a town of 80,000 inhabitants in the northwestern suburbs of Paris)

Source: <http://r-urban.net/en/sample-page/>

change, farming and food growing methods and the projects we are involved in. We would like to use our global food growing network to share our knowledge, skills and ideas with each other

excerpt from Hazlehurst Newsletter: June/July 2014

The intention of these spatially extended relationships was to ‘share news and information’ on commonly held interests such as ‘the effects of climate change, farming and food growing methods and the projects we are involved in’. Therefore they can be considered to be *interest-based* communities. The interactions were between partners in unequal (or *vertical*) social and economic settings; consequently they can be characterised as *linking* social capital (Glowacki-Dudka et al., 2013; Pelling and High, 2005). However the relationship can also be expressed as *bonding* social capital as it was initiated with the prospect of building alliances and comradeship between the geographically dispersed projects. Blay-Palmer et al. maintain that ‘such an approach... offers a platform to build information-sharing networks around common solutions and to foster solidarity building’ (2016:39).

The Management Committee of Hazlehurst also encouraged solidarity with other community agriculture schemes by inviting overseas visitors to their growing site:

On 11th June I showed Norvis Vasquez from Esteli⁹¹ in Nicaragua around our land... Norvis is doing an MA in sustainable food production in Switzerland, before he returns to Nicaragua to set up an organic ginger farm employing local people. He will export directly to a Swiss Fair-trade chocolate factory thus maximising income for local people. On his visit to Sheffield, Norvis was taken to a number of sustainable food projects and was delighted to visit Hazlehurst CSA... Norvis was keen to take back to Esteli what he has learnt about community supported agriculture and co-operative working in the UK

excerpt from Project Manager Update, Hazlehurst Newsletter No.15: June-July 2013

The purpose of this visit was to disseminate best practice at Hazlehurst to their community agriculture counterparts in Nicaragua. Therefore the exchange can be regarded as a form of reverse *linking* social capital whereupon Hazlehurst imparted knowledge to the other party: ‘Norvis was keen to take back to Esteli what he has learnt about community supported

⁹¹ ‘Esteli is the capital of the state of the same name in the north of Nicaragua, on the pan-american highway, the arterial road route that connects the continents of North and South America. Sheffield has been twinned with Esteli since 1984. Esteli and the countryside surrounding was one of the regions of Nicaragua to suffer the most violence during the revolution of the late 1970s and afterwards in the long and bitter contra war of the 1980s. Now the city has strong youth movements and a wide variety of organisations working hard to rebuild and strengthen communities and the structures which have enabled the country to establish a peaceful democracy’

Source: <http://www.sheffieldestelisociety.org.uk/about-us/>

agriculture'. In addition, the connection to another organic grower also served as a form of *bonding* social capital as evidenced by the newsletter article. Blay-Palmer et al. state '(k)nowledge sharing can be an important step in building the trust and associated social capital needed for creating bridges between different places and more meaningful, long-lasting political action' (2016:40).

The final example of an extended CSA community that I refer to is the global CSA network called Urgenci. According to their website:

URGENCI: an Urban - Rural network, Generating new forms of Exchange between Citizens is the international network of Community-Supported Agriculture initiatives fostering peer-based solidarity among CSA actors to actively contribute to the food sovereignty movement worldwide

source: <http://www.urgenci.net/>

Urgenci is based in France and grew out of a regionally-funded initiative to support local food networks. The objectives of Urgenci are 'to build a space for sharing, discussing and analysing the Community Supported Agriculture practices and strategies'; to 'foster exchanges between these partnerships'; to 'support the mobilisation of local networks'; to 'create alliances with other initiatives at the local, regional, national and international levels'; to 'coordinate actions at the international level and to facilitate their coherence'; and to 'dialogue with public institutions' (Urgenci, 2012:2). These objectives can be identified as an intention to create a combination of *bonding* and *bridging* social capital between individual projects, partnerships, funders and policymakers at every spatial scale. During the course of my fieldwork Urgenci was instrumental in establishing a European CSA Network⁹² and a CSA Research Group of like-minded researchers such as myself.

These global communities of CSA can also be depicted using Peters and Jackson's (2008) model of CSA interactions at different scales (*see figure 30*):

⁹² I attended the inaugural meeting of the European CSA Network in Milan in October 2012 with 120 other participants from 25 countries including another representative from COCA

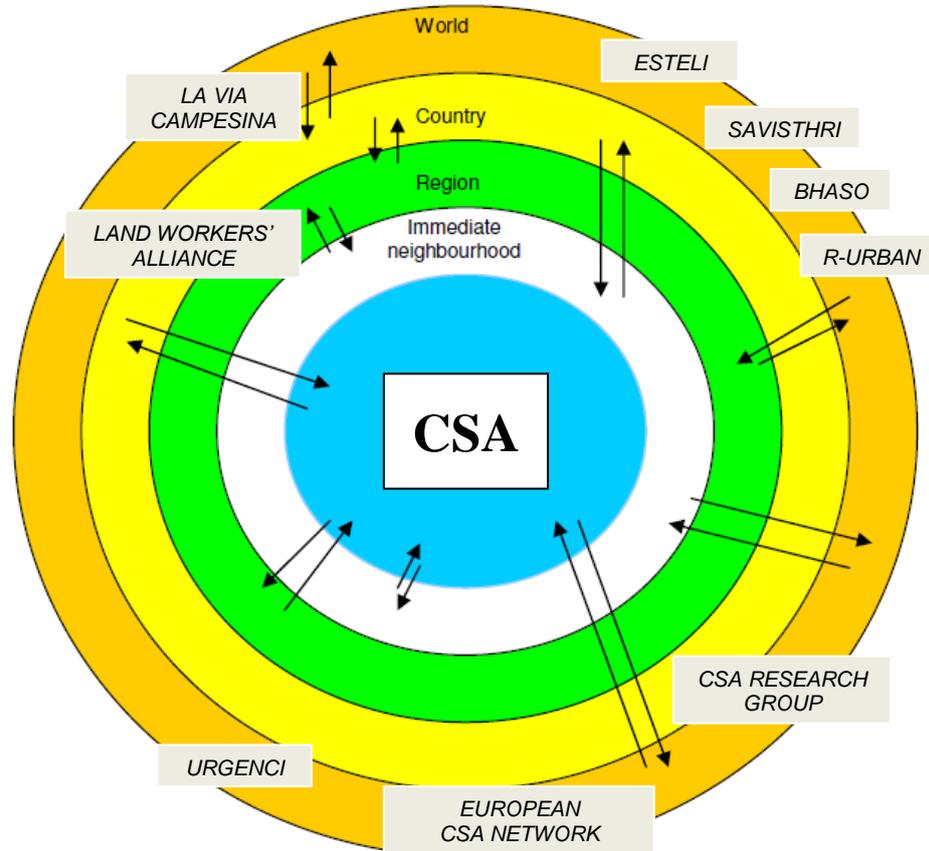


Figure 30: The interaction of CSA networks at global scales (adapted from Peters and Jackson, 2008:6)

In the preceding section I described some of the extended *interest*-based communities of my two case studies at the regional and global scale, and the *bonding* and *linking* social capital that the CSAs derived from them. I described how my case studies used the social capital of *personal resources* to generate links with NGOs such as the Soil Association and Organic Centre Wales to facilitate community capital in the form of the CSAs. I outlined links between CSAs such as COCA's association with Stroud Community Agriculture, and communities of CSAs at different scales: CSA Network UK; the European CSA Network; and Urgenci. I described how Hazlehurst joined the Land Workers' Alliance as a symbol of alliance with the food sovereignty movement, encouraged links with other community food projects in the developing world, and hosted site visits through international relationships. I argued that these spatially protracted, *interest*-based networks provided access to social, intellectual and financial capital for each of the CSAs; strengthened the resilience of my CSA case studies and the movement in general; and thereby promoted the transformative potential of Community Supported Agriculture. Blay-Palmer et al. state that 'these networks could enhance the sustainability and resilience of community food systems and facilitate wide scale food system transformation' (2016:27).

However, despite the vibrancy and extent of these social networks and its constituents, North has questioned whether ‘the fissiparous, rhizomatic climate change and resource crunch social movement space have enough coherence to have motive power’ (2011:1595) and Brown et al. dispute whether individual initiatives ‘will actually cohere to constitute a larger network or social movement, or if they will remain disparate places connected only by the willingness to transition’ (2012:1620). Lyth et al. have also argued that although NGOs such as CSA Network UK and Urgenci facilitate ‘social capital accumulation and together work to develop the capacity for social transformation... there is presently little recognition of the broad social benefits that flow from this social capital accumulation in formal assessments of these organisations’ (2017:17). In Chapter 7 I discuss the transformative potential of Community Supported Agriculture with regard to the institutional and policy landscape in the UK.

In the final section of this chapter I return to the immediate settings of my case studies to consider the social composition of the two CSAs. In the previous sections of this chapter I described how community is manifested at my case studies as a form of *place* or *interest*-based community, and how these communities are networked at broader spatial scales. However, as I described at the beginning of this chapter, Community Supported Agriculture has been critiqued as socially exclusive constituting ‘a boutique food system for those who can afford to make these purchases’ (Andreatta et al., 2008:120). Allen claims that ‘CSA shareholders do tend to be a rather select crowd’ (1999:125) and Goodman has described AFNs such as CSAs as a ‘flight to quality’ with low-income families being ‘the missing guests at the table’ (2004:13). In the following section I consider how my case studies facilitated *bridging* social capital to those sections of the local community that were under-represented in the CSA membership.

4.4.3

The limits to community

In the foregoing sections of this chapter I have described CSA communities at different scales of interaction using the concept of social capital. I detailed *bonding* social capital in the setting of my case studies and *linking* social capital amongst extended networks of community that reached across regions and countries. Although I have briefly described *bridging* social capital in the context of social events at COCA, heretofore it has been largely absent from my discussion. According to Firth et al., ‘(*b*)*ridging* social capital tends to be outward looking and brings together people from across diverse socio-demographic situations’ (2011:558, my italics). In the final section of this chapter I discuss the social composition of my two case studies and I outline strategies that were employed to create *bridging* social capital to reach sectors of the community that were under or un-represented at the CSAs.

Earlier in this chapter I argued that both of my CSAs were *place*-based communities. I also discussed how the two CSA communities overlapped and ultimately superseded the two social groupings that they derived from. In Sheffield the Transition Heeley-Meersbrook group which founded Hazlehurst also overlapped with another social grouping that had a distinct and very localised geographical setting around three adjoining streets; it was colloquially referred to as the Green Triangle, had its own community group and newsletter, and was recognised for its predominantly affluent liberal constituency. In California Galt et al. observed that successful CSAs ‘tend to be located around areas with liberal politics’ (2011:7) and Jarosz made similar findings in Washington State in North America (2011). In the UK Cox et al. concluded that proximity to an “alternative” community creates ‘a more conducive context than might exist in many places’ (2008:207).

At Hazlehurst the existing *bonding* social capital of the Green Triangle formation was frequently reproduced in the social relations of Transition Heeley-Meersbrook and, subsequently, Hazlehurst:

(T)he fact that I live in the Green Triangle. I mean it isn't insignificant...

Charlotte, Hazlehurst

I knew, yeah, 'cos Charlotte's my best mate so, err, um, I kind of got to know a bit of what's going on

Helen, Hazlehurst

Um, we go to Spanish class together...

Becky, Hazlehurst

Another Hazlehurst member referred to the environmental values of many of those that live in the area:

It's got the highest membership of Green Party members in the city in terms of a ward

Gerry, Hazlehurst

Whilst speaking at the Hazlehurst AGM in 2012⁹³, Nick Weir of Stroud Community Agriculture referred to their subscribers as “environmental deep-greens” and Bougherara et al. maintain that ‘(h)ouseholds sensitive to environmental and local social issues are more likely to participate in

⁹³ ‘The Fun, Figures and Freedom of Community Food Initiatives: An illustrated discussion with Nick Weir’ at Hazlehurst Annual General Meeting on 3rd October 2012
Source: author's field notes

CSA arrangements' (2009:1494). A participant at COCA describes a corresponding social configuration at my case study in Wales:

(W)hen I went to the first, one of the first plantings, all the people there, if you'd asked before I went who would be going, all the people I thought would be there were there so it's a set of people who live in a certain way and they were all there

Jean, Hazlehurst

Jean describes the participants at COCA as people 'who live in a certain way' that can be equated to Cohen's *relational* communities which are bounded from others according to, for example, environmental values (1985). Participants at COCA became involved in the CSA scheme through extant social groupings in the same manner as Hazlehurst:

I got involved because Gareth approached us though the Eco-City group

Annie, COCA

I was aware because I knew Maddy Phillips and every time I saw her she said: "Come on, you must come down, you must come down" and it was something I always wanted to do

Debbie, COCA

Each of these participants demonstrates the centrality of *bonding* social capital in pre-existing social networks that can be depicted as *place*-based communities. However, sometimes individuals approached the concept of CSA as members of an *interest*-based community:

Viv and Emyr had been talking about communal food production for about a year before because Emyr's brother lives in Stroud

Maddy, COCA

Emyr's brother was a subscriber of Stroud Community Agriculture in England; consequently, through the *bonding* social capital of family across space, the concept of CSA reached the setting of COCA in west Wales through a conduit of mutual interest. Generally, though, there is a low awareness of the concept of CSA in the UK (Soil Association, 2011a), that I observed even amongst those that participated in my case studies:

I'd never heard of CSAs, hadn't got a clue

Pete, COCA

I had no idea of what it was about, I hadn't heard of a CSA before then

Debbie, COCA

Authors also report low awareness of the concept in North America where there are currently at least 6000 CSAs⁹⁴ (Forbes and Harmon, 2008; Goland, 2002).

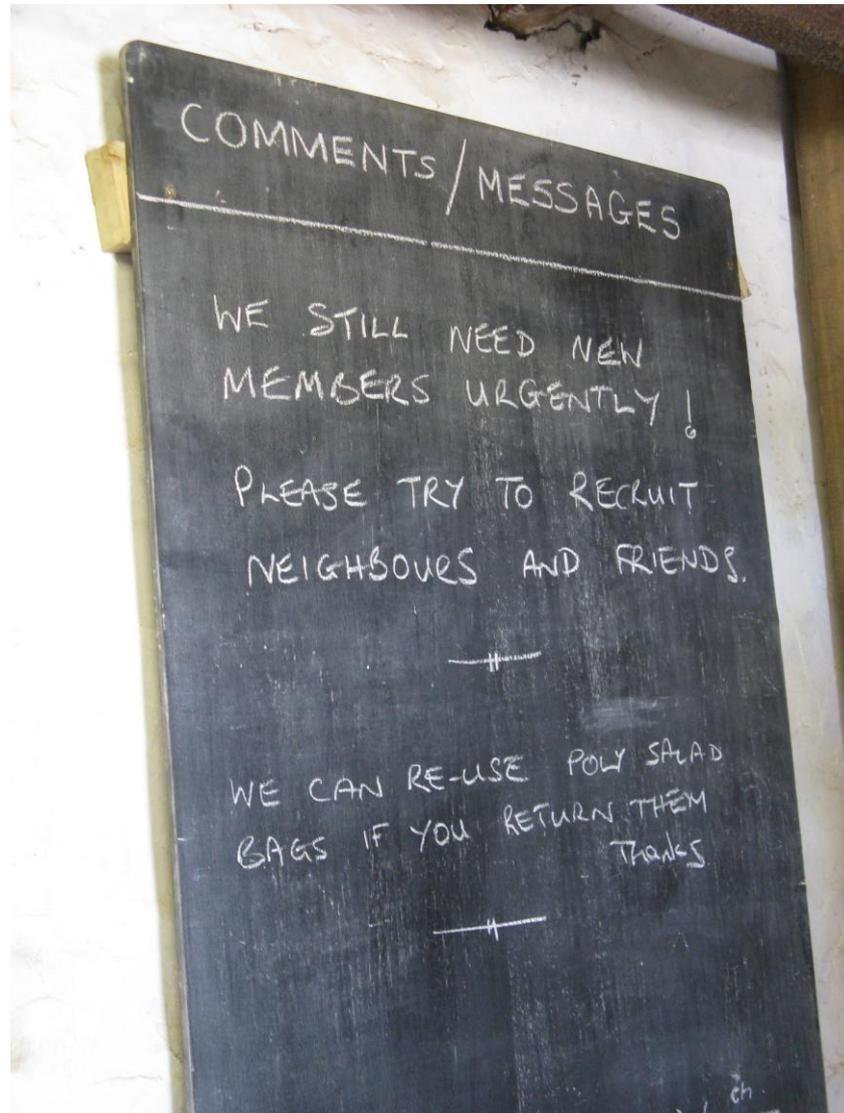


Figure 31: COCA appeals to its subscribers to recruit new members
Source: the author

At both of my case studies the predominant means of transmitting knowledge and information regarding Community Supported Agriculture was through word-of-mouth, or networks of informal *bonding* social capital (see figure 31). Brehm and Eisenauer claim that these avenues are ‘the most influential in motivating people to join’ (2008:98) and Lea et al. state that ‘word-of-mouth is likely to be the most effective means of increasing membership of CSA enterprises’ (2006:80). However, Macias observes that social networks, ‘however unintentionally’, are

⁹⁴ Local Harvest
Source: <http://www.localharvest.org/csa/>

exclusive and therefore concludes that ‘a select group of people will actually become members’ (2008:1096). A member of COCA reflected on the exclusivity of the CSA membership:

(I)t’s the same in all communities, circles of people and they never, rarely do they go across the layers of circles and so, somehow, you’ve got to break in because the people who were there, stereotypically, were educated, were mostly people who are from away or who’ve been away

Jean, COCA

Jean says: ‘rarely do they go across the layers of circles’ expressing the lack of *bridging* social capital amongst different sectors of the local community. She observes that participants in the scheme are educated and ‘were mostly people who are from away or who’ve been away’ indicating a bias towards a cosmopolitan rather than an indigenous community of CSA members.

At COCA various attempts were made to increase and broaden the membership. COCA received funding to market the CSA over a period of six months for one day a week; Ben, a member of the Core Group, promoted the scheme locally in the guise of COCA carrot (see *figure 32*) and, ultimately, it led to the introduction of the scheme’s website and the production of promotional leaflets. However, when these leaflets were subsequently distributed to every household in St Davids, they failed to elicit a single enquiry. Ben reflected on the lack of response from potential members:

(T)hey’ve always come in dribs and drabs, I suppose, umm, most of our mem, members have just come through word-of-mouth

Ben, COCA



Figure 32: 'COCA Carrot' promoting COCA at a community event near St Davids, May 2013

Source: the author

At Hazlehurst one of the key participants describes similar difficulties in reaching members of their local community:

A big shock to me when we started to sell this thing, we thought: right, we got three hundred, four hundred people on the Newsletter list, all we've got to do is send an email out saying, you know: Here's the box scheme, costs so much, just reply to this email, so we sent out four hundred emails straightaway at the touch of a button, absolutely no response. We put it in the Heeley Voice Newsletter, no response at all, um, err, we put it on the Green Triangle Newsletter list, no response

Keith, Hazlehurst

Keith concurs that impersonal forms of approach such as the email distribution were unsuccessful: ‘absolutely no response’. He continues:

The only way we could sell these bags was actually going to talk to people

Ian:

Word-of-mouth?

Keith:

Yeah, and we couldn’t have done that unless we had, um, mostly of the Green Triangle which was, is, the basis of our customers and it spread out through a network of people in Heeley-Meersbrook

Keith articulates how personalised and pre-existing *bonding* social capital was instrumental to the success of launching the veg-bag scheme: ‘actually going to talk to people’ and ‘we couldn’t have done that unless we had, um, mostly of the Green Triangle’. He explains how verbal social bonds advanced the reputation of the scheme to members of the local community: ‘it spread out through a network of people in Heeley-Meersbrook’. However, the social networks that Hazlehurst appealed to in order to enrol a membership were limited to the Green Triangle, its immediate environs and those who belonged to its email distribution list.

There is a considerable and consistent volume of research from North America suggesting that CSA membership is exclusive. Psarikidou and Szerszynski claim that local food initiatives such as CSAs ‘are often dominated by the new middle class, and serve little more than a niche market’ (2012a:37). Aiken has suggested that this may, in part, represent a ‘civic core’ who ‘tend to be middle-aged, well educated and live in prosperous areas’ and ‘are well resourced – financially, educationally and with time’ (2012:96). The author suggests this social group are most likely to volunteer and are more likely to be women, which was also reflected in a slight gender bias at my case studies. I explore the human capital of CSA in greater detail in Chapter 6.

DeLind and Bingen argue that ‘relationships built solely or principally on market or market-like transactions, however friendly, define players in these very terms’ (2008:128) and Hendrickson and Heffernan maintain that ‘emerging local food systems still require money as a medium of exchange, so low-income groups have less resources with which to participate in the alternative’ (2002:365). In Chapter 6 I discuss how both my case studies sought to introduce non-monetary forms of exchange to include less financially advantaged members.

At Hazlehurst a subscriber describes her financial relationship to the veg-bag that she receives:

I don't know how the costs of the bag are worked out but, you know, I can afford to buy the bag every week, regardless of what's in it, really, I'm not, kind of, dependent [emphasises] on that bag to keep the wolf from the door, if you like [smiles]. So I don't mind supporting, you know, whatever I get is fine, and I can supplement it easily

Gemma, Hazlehurst

Gemma demonstrates her relative affluence: 'I'm not, kind of, dependent [emphasises] on that bag to keep the wolf from the door' and 'I can supplement it easily'. Gemma is able to buy additional groceries if the veg-bag is insufficient for her needs and 'can afford to buy the bag every week, regardless of what's in it'. In North America Cone and Myhre also observed that '(m)ost shareholders appeared to be sufficiently affluent that price was not a major issue, or not so much an issue that it overrode the goals of healthy food and environment' (2000:196). Gemma says: 'I don't mind supporting' implying that there is a philanthropic dimension to her subscription. I return to this theme in Chapter 6 when I discuss how my case study members make personal sacrifices on behalf of the CSA projects.

DuPuis and Goodman state that 'the local is often a site of inequality' (2005:359) and Allen asserts that 'localities contain within them wide demographic ranges and social relationships of power' (2010:301). Smith and Seyfang observe that '(c)ommunities are messy things that can be divisive, hierarchical, and excluding, as well as exhibiting solidarity, equitableness, and inclusion' (2013:3) whilst Aitken reflects that 'community' necessitates a boundary' (2012:95). Hinrichs and Kremer, who researched CSAs in the Midwest of North America, discovered that CSA members belonged disproportionately to the higher classes of household income, occupation and education (2002). Busa and Garder have also raised concerns regarding 'the racialized nature and exclusivity of the movement' (2015:324). Consequently Goodman and DuPuis have commented that 'Consumer Supported Agriculture may appear to be an epiphenomenal and transitory utopian entertainment for a few middle class consumers and their fortunate few farmer friends' (2002:17).

A member of the Management Committee at Hazlehurst expressed her own concerns regarding the social composition of the CSA membership:

I'm very wary, you know if a CSA goes down the route of supplying nice organic veg to the well-heeled people like me... then I don't know what we're doing. I feel very strongly about that

Helen, Hazlehurst

However Hazlehurst was keen to promote the philosophy of inclusivity at the CSA:

Anyone can volunteer no matter what age, race or class, unemployed or between jobs, retired, or finished at uni or just need to get out of the house for a while. Your csa needs you and you will benefit from the fresh air and exercise, and have fun while gaining valuable experience in growing organically.

Warm drinks and shelter are provided. And travelling expenses will be reimbursed. Plus veg wages for all volunteers!

email from Bridie to Hazlehurst members and volunteers

The language of this statement is deliberately inclusive: 'Anyone can volunteer'; the intention is to create *bridging* social capital to all sectors of society and emphasises that income is not a barrier to participation: 'travelling expenses will be reimbursed'. However, the email was only circulated to existing members of the CSA scheme and those who subscribed to the volunteering email list, although Hazlehurst also made use of the Voluntary Action Sheffield⁹⁵ website to promote volunteer opportunities, and it recruited students through the University of Sheffield volunteering database⁹⁶.

As I have discussed earlier in this section, the majority of the membership of Hazlehurst was focussed around the location of the Green Triangle. However most members were geographically distant from the growing site as it had not been possible to acquire horticultural land in the immediate vicinity of the Heeley-Meersbrook neighbourhood that the Green Triangle is situated in (*see figure 33*). The Management Committee at Hazlehurst utilised a range of strategies to engage the neighbouring communities that bordered the growing site, largely through the efforts of a part-time Project Manager who was employed using grant funding during the first season that the veg-bag scheme was operational:

Hazlehurst CSA is keen to build links with the local community, build awareness around climate change, organic growing and healthy eating

source: <http://hazlehurst.coop/outreach-activity/>

⁹⁵ 'Voluntary Action Sheffield (VAS) works to improve the quality of life for all of Sheffield's communities by supporting voluntary and community action in the city.' VAS delivers 'a wide range of services, including specialist support, advice and training, to over 900 voluntary and community organisations and charities each year'

Source: <http://www.vas.org.uk/>

⁹⁶ <http://su.sheffield.ac.uk/sheffield-volunteering>

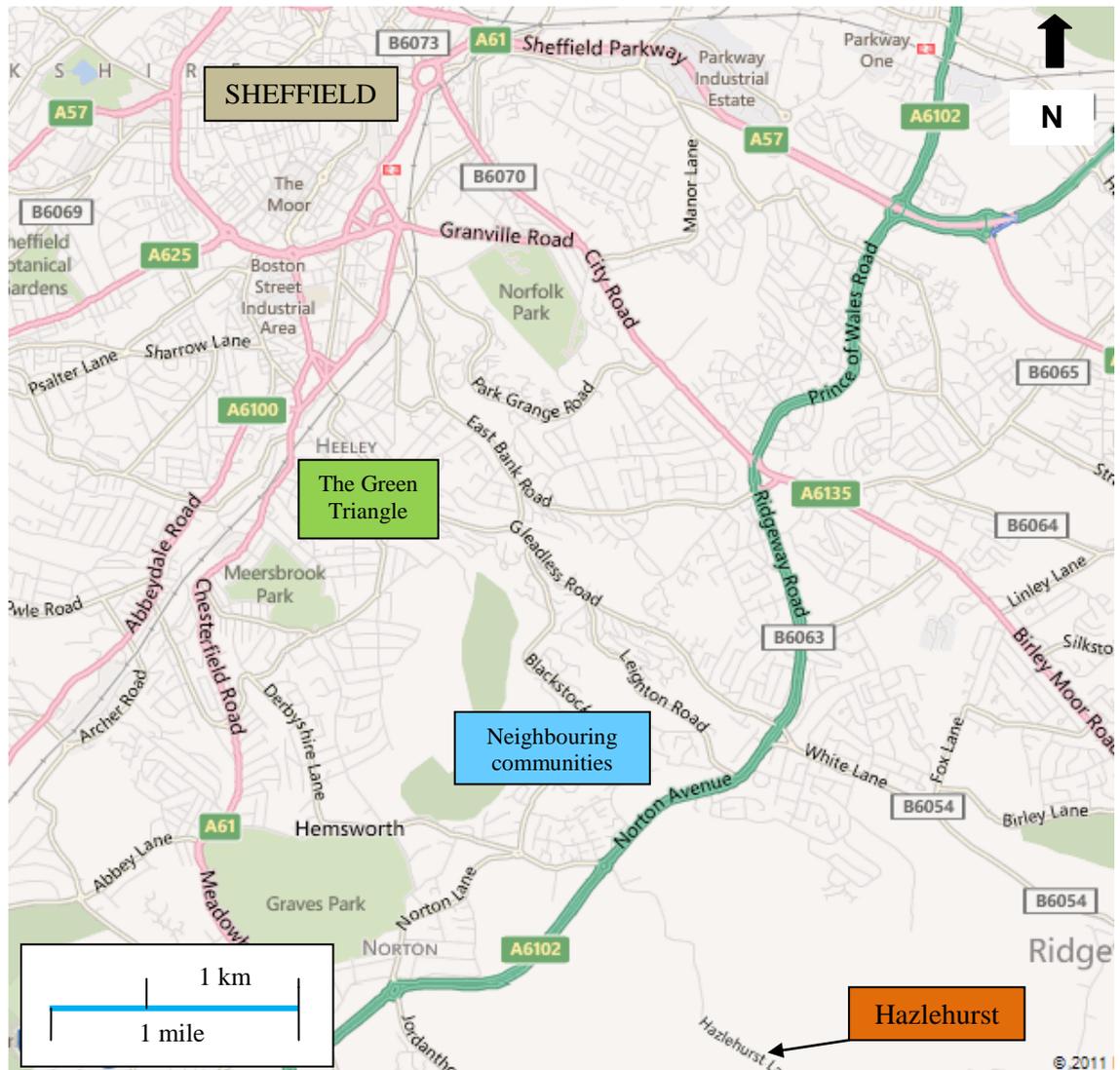


Figure 33: The geographical location of the Green Triangle, Hazlehurst and neighbouring communities

The ‘links with the local community’ can be characterised as attempts to create *bridging* social capital with disadvantaged low-income neighbourhoods adjoining the growing site that did not comprise membership of the CSA. One of the strategies that Hazlehurst developed was a partnership with a foodbank in a neighbouring community. In collaboration with a community worker the Project Manager at Hazlehurst initiated ‘Cook and Eat’ sessions with foodbank users cooking meals with vegetables sourced from the CSA growing site:

There is a core of regular attendees who help make a healthy lunch to share with foodbank users. They usually have enough to take home to their families too. So far recipes have included soup, pasta and vegetable sauce, homemade vegetable pizzas, healthy spring rolls and vegetable lasagne

source: <http://hazlehurst.coop/outreach-activity/>

Forbes and Harmon describe similar relationships between CSAs and food banks across many states in North America (2008). Hazlehurst also co-partnered ‘Learn to grow your own food’ sessions (*see figure 34*) in the same neighbourhood:

I have been working with Kim Hinchliffe at Gleadless Valley Community Forum on some gardening sessions at the One 4 All Community Hub on Morland Road. We hope this will act as a stepping stone for people to come out to visit Hazelhurst. See the poster above for more details.

excerpt from Hazlehurst Newsletter No. 15: June-July 2013



Figure 34: Flyer for community growing event co-partnered by Hazelhurst

The ‘Learn to grow your own food’ events were intended to establish a connection between the growing site of the CSA and its neighbouring communities: ‘We hope this will act as a stepping stone for people to come out to visit Hazelhurst’ and can therefore be conceptualised as another form of *bridging* social capital. The intention was to establish a new, proximate, *place*-based community attached to the CSA.

However the Project Manager had some reservations regarding the ethics of this strategy:

Yeah, it kind of sits a bit uncomfortably with me sometimes when I'm inviting people out to the land, heh [slight self-conscious laugh], to come and help us pick, or whatever, but then the veg, the priority of the veg goes to our customers who are able to pay a premium [slight self-conscious laugh], you know, when actually the families that I'm doing outreach to, it's inaccessible the cost of the bag

Sarah, Hazlehurst

Sarah expresses her discomfort at the social inequality of the scheme: (they) 'come and help us pick' but the neighbouring community implicitly do not belong to 'us' because they lack the financial capital to subscribe to a veg-share: 'but then the veg, the priority of the veg goes to our customers'. The members of the neighbouring community that the Project Manager attempts to engage with belong to the social class that Hendrickson and Heffernan describe as financially excluded from schemes such as CSA (2002).

However, Hazlehurst was able to accept food vouchers as partial payment for veg-shares:

We did the Healthy Start voucher⁹⁷, they're a government voucher for people on benefits, I don't know what level but, it's the most, the poorest people who get them, I think they've got to have children under five, so you get so much off, err, we can accept them as part-payment, but even with that it's still expensive, like they could get a lot more veg, non-organic vegetables, I don't think it's, that's a realistic option

Sarah, Hazlehurst

Sarah concedes that, despite applying the voucher discount, the veg-bag is still financially unattainable for those on a low-income: 'even with that it's still expensive'. Scrinis has argued that the direct relationship between producer and consumer in CSA makes veg-shares more affordable due to the lack of intermediaries (2007). Hazlehurst were seeking to address financial inequality by introducing a 'budget-bag' veg-share specifically for the disadvantaged neighbouring communities.

In Edmonton, Canada, Connelly et al. describe how Foodshare distributed fresh fruit and vegetables in the Good Food Box to low-income families using grant funding to subsidise the cost of production (2011). However, in its second year funding was withdrawn and more high-value, pre-packed meal options were introduced to ensure the viability of the scheme. Johnston and Baker, also writing about the Good Food Box, maintain 'that *state-sponsored* solutions to

⁹⁷ Healthy Start is an NHS scheme that provides weekly vouchers for low-income families to spend on milk, plain fresh and frozen fruit and vegetables, infant formula milk and vitamins
Source: <http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/>

entrenched structural problems of global capitalism' will be required to scale-out such schemes to include low-income families: 'food security will not and cannot be provided by the market' (2005:319, my italics). Authors such as Patricia Allen concurs: 'there is a contradiction between making food affordable and providing a decent return for the farm unit in the absence of public subsidy' (1999:125); she also states that low-income families are less able to share the risk of production by committing financially to a veg-share which is not materially assured, and they 'are already overwhelmed with the demands of productive and reproductive labor in their own jobs and households' to consider practical participation in a CSA scheme (ibid). In addition, Stagl describes how in North America limited access to private transport inhibited membership of low-income households because of the remoteness of farms (2002).

In the final section of this chapter I have described the social composition of both of my case studies. At each CSA the membership largely conformed to the educated, white, middle-class, affluent, pro-environmental constituency depicted by the literature on the exclusivity of AFNs (DuPuis and Goodman, 2005; Guthman, 2003; Hinrichs and Kremer, 2002). One of the interviewees at COCA was pragmatic regarding the social constituency of the CSA:

(W)e can't all possibly see the same way, we aren't all going to agree with each other, and we're not all going to want to be doing the same thing so I think you have to come to terms with the fact there will always be a community within a population like this that will be interested in CSAs

Annie, COCA

Annie articulates the distinctions between the interests of different sectors of the local community: 'there will always be a community within a population like this'. However, the transformative potential of CSA is confined by its inability to reach beyond a narrow social composition.

I also depicted how my two case studies attempted to engage with the communities that they were geographically embedded in through strategies such as local marketing at COCA and outreach work by the Project Manager at Hazlehurst. I outlined how these strategies can be characterised as attempts to create *bridging* social capital to reach sectors of the community that were not represented at the CSAs, and to establish new, proximate, *place*-based communities attached to the CSAs. Earlier in this chapter I described how the membership of Hazlehurst was predominantly socially homogenous. However, it was the *social capital* derived from its bounded identity, particularly relating to Transition Heeley-Meersbrook and the Green Triangle, which arguably afforded Hazlehurst its resilience: 'we couldn't have done that unless we had, um, mostly of the Green Triangle' (p.127).

4.5

Conclusions

I began this chapter by stating that community was portrayed as a core value by both of my case studies. I reviewed the contested concept of community in academic literature and, in the context of Community Supported Agriculture, I defined community as ‘*people sharing and interacting with a common purpose*’ (Moseley, 2003, cited in Firth et al., 2011:557, my italics). Using the framework of *social capital*, I drew on the methodology of Firth et al. (2011) to consider the nature and extent of community at my case studies. I employed a three-part typology of social capital comprising *bonding*, *bridging* and *linking* to describe my CSA communities. Following Firth et al. (2011) I also proposed that my case studies could either be identified as *place*-based or *interest*-based communities, or a hybrid of both. I used Peters and Jackson’s (2008) model of overlapping communities to illustrate the combination of *place*-based and *interest*-based communities of CSA at different scales of interaction from the neighbourhood to the global.

I argued that CSA members in my case studies can be placed along a continuum of participation from ‘low-end’ veg-share subscribers to ‘top-end’ volunteers on the executive bodies of the CSAs (Jacques and Collins, 2003). I maintained that those participants at the ‘top-end’ of the spectrum comprise a more *place*-based community than those at the ‘low-end’, on account of their embodied and embedded activities on behalf of the CSAs. I claimed that all members shared the *interest*-based community, notwithstanding their levels of participation. I argued that the resilience of the CSAs depends on a cohort of dedicated members who comprise a *place*-based community, participating in the material and social reproduction of the schemes. However, those members who merely have an *interest* in receiving a veg-share also contribute to the economic resilience of the schemes.

I outlined how CSA was perceived by some members as an *interest*-based community for mobilising political and ecological beliefs that can be portrayed as a means of identity formation. I also characterised share-holders who supported the schemes financially but did not subscribe to the veg-shares as another community of *interest*. I outlined how *place*-based community is manifested in the context of my case study settings and described *bonding* social capital as evidenced by interviewees’ statements such as: ‘I like the company’ (p.98); ‘it’s got an important sort of social and glueing mechanism for the community’ (p.98); and ‘it’s a nice community activity’ (p.98). I described how my case studies used social events such as the Houchie Couchie Weeding Day or regular pub meetings at Hazlehurst to encourage members to build *bonding* social capital. I also suggested that these events were a means of stimulating *bridging* social capital to individuals such as students who volunteered at Hazlehurst or the

annual Harvest Party at COCA that was intended to introduce non-members to the CSA scheme. I argued that the resilience of the schemes depended on keeping and attracting members by providing popular social events.

I maintained that social capital was brought directly to the project by participating individuals in the form of *personal resources*, and was facilitated by participants in relation to extended social networks for the benefit of the CSAs in the form of *professional advice* and *sources of funding*. Therefore members of Hazlehurst developed *linking* social capital with the *Making Local Food Work* programme to assist in the inception of the scheme, and COCA received financial assistance through an association with a funding body that was facilitated by one of its Core Team members. I argued that social capital consisted of a *network* of interactions comprising an *interest-based* community and I enlarged my definition of CSA communities to include extended networks with mutual and shared interests such as food sovereignty including Hazlehurst's membership of the Land Workers' Alliance and their association with community food projects in the developing world. I depicted CSA as a social movement of networks at national, European and global scales such as the newly formed CSA Network UK and the Paris-based Urgenci, as well as associations amongst CSAs such as the relationship between COCA and Stroud Community Agriculture that was supported by Organic Centre Wales. I argue that these networks of CSA strengthened the resilience of my case studies and the CSA movement in general, promoting the transformative potential of Community Supported Agriculture.

Finally, I described the narrow social composition of my case studies and how membership was usually generated through word-of-mouth or informal networks of *bonding* social capital. I outlined strategies such as accepting Healthy Start Vouchers in part-payment for veg-shares and the 'Cook and Eat' sessions initiated by Hazlehurst. These devices were intended to create *bridging* social capital with un- or under-represented sectors of the community, and to establish new *place-based* communities in the neighbourhoods closest to the growing site. I maintain that the transformative potential of CSA is currently constrained by its ability to reach all sectors of community, although my case studies also derived *social capital* from their geographical and social boundedness such as the Green Triangle in Sheffield.

In the following Chapter 5: *Moral Economy* I describe a range of ethical tensions that are inherent to Community Supported Agriculture and depict how the intersection of moral convictions and economic considerations affected everyday practice at my case studies. I discuss how tensions between moral and market aspects of the economy of CSAs circumscribe the transformative potential of Community Supported Agriculture.

Chapter 5: *Moral Economy*

5.1

Introduction

(W)e started off with the idea that we share, you know, there's a row of spinachs, that's shared between the membership, now it isn't

Maddy, COCA

Maddy, a COCA Core Group member, articulates her frustration that the founding ethos of 'sharing the harvest' between CSA members has been abandoned; other marketing outlets were developed to meet perceived financial requirements to distribute COCA produce beyond the membership of its veg-share subscribers. At Hazlehurst Helen also demonstrates unease:

I don't think we have done anything to suggest to people that they're part of something, we're just selling the veg

Helen, Hazlehurst

Helen, a member of the Hazlehurst Management Committee, suggests that the CSA doesn't endorse the ethics of Community Supported Agriculture and is merely promoting the veg-share as another alternative in the local market for organic vegetables: 'we're just selling the veg'.

Arguably the *moral economy of CSA* distinguishes it from other forms of agriculture and, as I illustrate above, was the second dominant theme relating to CSA practices and beliefs that I observed at my case studies. I apply the analytical framework of *moral economy* to my case studies to describe inherent tensions that arise between the *ethical* principles and *financial* imperatives of establishing and operating a Community Supported Agriculture scheme. I discuss how this conflict was manifested at my case studies and consider how the distinctive *moral economy of CSA* informs the potential of Community Supported Agriculture to promote resilience and contribute to transition to a more sustainable and localised form of agriculture.

I begin by introducing the concept of a *moral economy* and argue that all economies are a fusion of ethical and economic deliberations. I then describe a moral economy of food using the related concepts of *Civic Agriculture* (Lyson, 2000) and an *ethical foodscape* (Morgan, 2010). The remainder of the chapter is divided into three sections: in the first section I discuss the *moral economy of CSA* and *structural tensions* that arise as CSAs seek to operate ethically within a market economy; Feagan and Henderson argue that '(t)ensions around "value" run deeply in CSA operation— usually pitting "economic" versus broader valuation aspirations' (2009:211). I outline a recent trend that has been described as '*the changing face of CSA*' (Lang, 2010a, my italics); CSA projects increasingly appear to be sacrificing some of the founding principles of

the movement and adopting market practices in order to attract and retain a membership. In this context I draw on Hinrichs to argue that socially embedded markets such as CSAs are mitigated by *marketness* and *instrumentalism* (2000). I propose that CSAs undertake different approaches to quotidian moral and economic considerations that can be positioned along a *instrumental/collaborative* continuum reflecting the degree to which CSAs are financially or ethically orientated (Feagan and Henderson, 2009).

I devote the final two sections of the chapter to a description of tensions in the specific context of my case studies drawing on empirical material from my fieldwork. At Hazlehurst I outline conflicts that arose as the key participants initially sought to formulate the aims and moral vision of the CSA. In particular I focus on two key issues of *governance* and *permaculture* to demonstrate *moral tensions* such as ensuring social justice for the professional CSA growers and the possible inclusion of animals as part of the vegetable growing cycle. In the final section I adapt the model of Lund et al.'s (2013) six-part segmentation of Danish organic consumers to situate CSA participants along a spectrum of member commitment that complements Feagan and Henderson's (2009) *instrumental/collaborative* approaches to CSA. I conclude by describing implicit *operational tensions* that arose at COCA as key participants sought to balance ethical positions with economic imperatives. I describe the introduction of *boxing-up* and *remote hubs* to illustrate how the original ethos of COCA was modified to accommodate the perceived expectations of members. I use the reciprocal models of CSA approaches and member commitment to position these strategies and the responses of participants along a continuum that reflects the immanent tension between ethics and economics which comprises the production and consumption of Community Supported Agriculture.

I begin the first section of this chapter by outlining the concept of a moral economy. Mobilising Lyson's concept of Civic Agriculture (2000), I position CSA within a moral economy of food and as part of an 'ethical foodscape' (Morgan, 2010).

5.2

A moral economy

Sayer has suggested that although the concept of a moral economy may appear to be an oxymoron, 'all economic institutions are *founded on norms...* (that) require *some moral behaviour* of actors, and generate effects that *have ethical implications*' (2007:261, my italics). The historian E.P. Thompson first used the term to describe food riots in England in the 18th Century (1966), although the foundations of the concept derive from the work of the 18th Century economist Adam Smith who argued that economic relations cannot be isolated from moral or ethical considerations (1776). Rather than the detached, self-regulating 'invisible hand'

so often characterised in Smith’s work, it is argued that markets are deeply immersed in sociality that ‘*envelopes and conditions* market forces’ (Kloppenburg et al., 1996:36; my italics). Sage asserts that actors in a moral economy ‘offset purely personal financial incentives against social criteria involving collective, community or environmental benefits’ (2003:48).

Morgan et al. characterise opposing ethical worlds of agricultural production: the *conventional* and the *alternative*, although they argue that the boundaries are increasingly indistinct (2006). However, authors such as Jackson et al. have critiqued this dualistic dichotomy claiming that ‘the operation of markets *depends on and influences* moral and ethical sentiments, norms and behaviours’ (2009:13; my italics). Consequently Sage argues that the so-called “free market” is a chimera; all commercial transactions are governed by an “‘entanglement’” (that) arises from the hybridity of moral and money economies that impose certain obligations and responsibilities on both transacting parties’ (2003:49). In a process of mutual constitution, moral positions inform the functioning of the market and economic relations influence the ethical landscape (see *Figure 35*) (Sayer, 2000). Thereby economics and ethics have a relationship of ‘fundamental inseparability’ (Jackson, 2002:4):

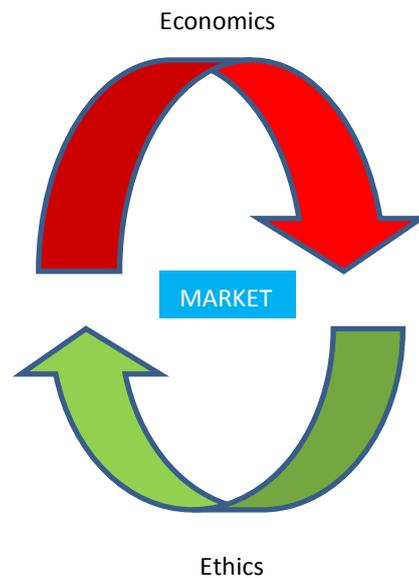


Figure 35: The mutual constitution of markets

For the purpose of this chapter, I adopt Lacy’s definition of a moral economy as ‘a system of exchange justified in relation to social or moral sanctions, as opposed to the operation of free markets’ (2000:21). In subsequent sections I demonstrate the negotiated hybridity of economics and ethics at my case studies.

5.3.1

A moral economy of food

Lucy Jarosz defines a moral economy of food as an ethics of consumer care that ‘demands an engagement with the political economy and ecology of what I eat’ (2011:318). Therefore, for an individual, a moral economy of food implies two fundamentally related issues: who produces my food; and in what way? Goodman et al. describe this concern as ‘the recognition of the material and social relationships of food provisioning’ that ultimately leads to ‘the constitution of knowledges about this food for consumers’ (2010:1783). Voget-Kleschin argues that ‘food consumption constitutes a paradigmatic example for the tensions between individual - and allegedly private - lifestyles on the one hand and societal and thus normatively significant consequences of such lifestyles on the other’ (2015:455). Fair Trade exemplifies this recent trend in creating more transparent producer/consumer relationships (Raynolds, 2002; Shreck, 2005; Torgerson, 2010). In the case of coffee, Goodman describes how a material and semiotic moral economy of Fair Trade is constructed and maintained across space connecting affluent developed-world café customers with distant third world coffee producers (2004). Both of my case studies produce regular electronic newsletters to disseminate their *moral economy of CSA*. For example, in Chapter 6 I discuss how COCA used their newsletter to present a particular set of values to their members regarding the seasonality of its veg-share and the ‘hungry gap’.

5.3.2

Civic Agriculture

The American sociologist Thomas Lyson posits a concept of re-localised farming and distribution that he styled Civic Agriculture (2000). He states that commodity agriculture is predicated solely on the profit motive: ‘producing as much food as possible for the least cost’ (Lyson, 2005:92). Elsewhere Lyson maintains that ‘farms are simply *places* where production occurs independent of the local community or social order’ (Lyson and Guptill, 2004:372, original italics). However, in their study of Australian farming, Lockie and Halpin (2005) have argued that commodity agriculture is more multi-dimensional whilst Herman observes that farms in southern England are a ‘complex moral economy’ with ‘responsibilities to... both human and non-human actants’ (2015:102). Therefore, as I have argued earlier, all markets are embedded in ethics and economics to varying degrees. In contrast to conventional farming, Lyson contends that:

Civic Agriculture embodies a commitment to developing and strengthening an economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable system of agriculture and food production that relies on local resources and serves local markets and consumers

(2005:92)

Specifically he claims that in Civic Agriculture '(t)he imperative to earn a profit is filtered through a set of cooperative and mutually supporting social relations' (ibid). According to Trauger et al. who studied female farmers in Pennsylvania, Civic Agriculture subverts conventional economic rationality (2010); the concept of profitability is redefined in terms of long-term broader sustainability and re-establishing direct connections between farmers and their customers. Ross, in her study of localised agriculture in Maine, characterises Civic Agriculture as valuing '*cooperation over competition and quality over quantity*' (2006:115, my italics). Civic Agriculture is portrayed as an economically robust but environmentally sensitive model of agriculture that reconnects producers and consumers and brings the ethical dimensions of agriculture to the fore regarding the sustainability of its operation for present and future generations. DeLind argues that Civic Agriculture reconnects communities to their sense of place, encourages citizenship and promotes environmentalism (2002).

However Trauger et al. have cautioned against Civic Agriculture being 'painted too rosy' arguing that it is still configured within market relations and that power and privilege remains with affluent middle-class consumers rather than struggling farmers (2010:45). Obach and Tobin are also heedful of 'the more exuberant claims made about this social development... (t)he economic component of all civic agriculture cannot be ignored' (2014:318). I develop this tension in the following section of this chapter when I describe '*the changing face of CSA*' (Lang, 2010a, my italics).

In her study conducted in north-east England, Charles asserts that CSA is an attempt 'to engage with ethical issues in the food system' (2011:362). Schnell claims that CSA is 'more economically and socially just, locally based, and environmentally sustainable' (2007:551). Customers are typically framed as "shareholders", "members", or "subscribers" (Cone and Myhre, 2000); they invest in a share of the farm, often for the duration of a year thereby demonstrating a contractual commitment to the farmer. The grower pledges to share the produce from the farm on an equitable basis between the shareholders; the quantity and quality of veg-shares varies according to the season, the vagaries of weather, and the success of the grower depending on their knowledge and expertise. Galt maintains that 'CSA as a movement seeks to redress aspects of capitalist exploitation and environmental destruction' (2011:135). Thus, according to Lyson's parameters of social, economic and environmental sustainability, CSA

may also be conceptualised as a form of Civic Agriculture. However, Janssen qualifies this codification by stating that it is community engagement, not CSA of itself, which renders it civic (2010)⁹⁸.

At my case studies members were able to *share* in the collaborative constitution of CSA in many different forms; members could share the labour of production such as volunteering on the growing site or by participating in the executive bodies; some members shared their transport to distribute veg-shares and, as I have mentioned previously, at Hazlehurst it was also possible to buy investment shares in the social enterprise. Furthermore, members shared their veg-shares with other members or neighbours when produce was in abundance. Therefore the conventional atomised, impersonal, consumer relationship was re-defined in terms of partnership and mutuality as members shared the responsibilities, risks and rewards of CSA with the farmers, and between themselves. Holloway et al. argue that through their participation in CSA members acquire *material* and *social* agency ‘with different forms of exchange associated with different types of social relationship’ (2007:12). Consequently Migliore et al. argue that ‘*value capture* is significant but less so than *value creation*’ (2014:897, my italics). I describe these re-configured mutual modes of CSA exchange in greater detail in Chapter 6.

Wells and Gradwell have characterised CSA as a caring-practice (2001). Kneafsey describes CSAs as ‘expressions of ‘an ‘ethic of care’ for the people, communities, soils, animals and ecosystems involved in food production’ (2010:185) and Dowler et al. refer to ‘(c)are-full relationships... aware of the needs of close and distant others, human and non-human’ (2010:216). Press and Arnould maintain that this position ‘asserts the morality of responsibility not only to the land, but also to past and future generations’ (2011:185). Citing Gibson-Graham (2006), Jarosz claims that CSA is a form of post-capitalist politics which ‘emphasizes the care and nurturing of people and the environment as part of an ethical positioning that challenges the processes of privatization, unfettered capital accumulation (and) competition’ (2011:308)⁹⁹. Psarikidou and Szerszynski argue that these combined qualities of caring ‘encourage us to speak in the language of the “moral economy”’ (2012a:36). Later in this chapter I describe conflicts that arose regarding different aspects of caring, such as the welfare of the CSA growers (*governance*) or stewardship of the land using animals (*permaculture*), and, following Lund et al. (2013), I argue that it is possible to position CSA members along a continuum according to their level of ethical commitment versus economic self-interest.

⁹⁸ See Chapter 4 for a discussion of the role of community engagement at my case studies

⁹⁹ I return to Gibson-Graham’s (2006) post-capitalist politics when I discuss *Diverse Economies* in Chapter 6 (p.197)

5.3.3

The ethical foodscape

Authors such as Kevin Morgan have proposed the concept of an ‘ethical foodscape’ (2010).

Goodman et al. have defined an ethical foodscape:

as a way of conceptualising and *engaging critically* with the processes, politics, spaces, and places of the praxis of ethical relationalities embedded and produced in and through the provisioning of food

(2010:1783, my italics)

Morgan argues that components of the ethical foodscape such as local food, Fair Trade, and the organic sector, for instance, are all ‘espousing certain *values-in-action*... associated with ecological integrity and social justice’ (2010:1853, my italics) and Henderson refers to CSAs as ‘a site-specific form of solidarity’ (2012). Therefore CSA can be depicted as a critical engagement with the ethical values and practice of food embodying Lyson’s concept of Civic Agriculture (2000). Psarikidou and Szerszynski describe the “ethical foodscape” as a “*moral taskscape*” in which people dwell and move, interacting with soil, food, and each other through situated practices involving skill and judgment’ (2012a:30, my italics).

One of my interviewees expressed it thus:

I think, for me that's why this is so valuable because it's a very small thing to do in the face of all that but it's real, it's concrete, you can actually do it, it has a feedback and it's the right thing to do, so in a very small way, it's ethically correct, it makes you feel like you're doing something to contribute

Becky, Hazlehurst

Ostrom has also made the distinction between policy and practice: ‘unlike efforts to forge environmental, agricultural, or food system change at a policy level, csa participants can reap immediate, practical rewards for their efforts’ (2007:100). One of my interviewees and a key figure on the Management Committee at Hazlehurst concurred:

I was involved in the climate change group about six years ago and it's all that kind of level of the council. It's all very tedious and feels like nothing really gets done

Alan, Hazlehurst

However, Morgan also cautions that the ethical foodscape comprises many different forms such as ‘local’ (food miles) and ‘global’ (Fair Trade) that are not necessarily compatible (2010). For

example, Wilson and Jackson have described how Fair Trade of bananas from the Windward Isles inadvertently reproduces asymmetrical trading relations established during colonial rule: ‘the moral economy of Fairtrade bananas can have paradoxical effects’ (2016:20). Elsewhere, McEwan et al. claim that ‘Fairtrade risks becoming an abstract ethical and regulatory tool’ that overlooks the ‘place-based moral experiences of producers’ (2017:572). Freidberg (2010) has also argued that mainstream food providers such as supermarket chains have extended their offer to customers to include organic and Fair Trade products in a process that has been portrayed as ‘ethical hijack’ (Sustain, 2008). Supermarkets such as Wal-Mart in North America have been attempting to capture more of the organic sector by aggressively undercutting the price of established suppliers (Lockie, 2009). Therefore, according to Goodman et al., ‘many so-called more ethical foods have become now equally a part of more conventional food systems’ (2010:1783).

Consequently ethical products are no longer necessarily bounded within the domain of alternative food networks (Winter, 2003a); the breadth of the ethical foodscape has widened and its currency has arguably been diluted. Jaffee and Howard maintain that this co-option by corporate interests is driven by ‘the motive of accumulation’, rather than ethical considerations (2000) and Jackson describes this process as part of ‘all-encompassing ‘consumer culture’ where every act of resistance is immediately recuperated by the market in successive rounds of commodification’ (2002:3). Authors such as Julie Guthman have also highlighted how the contrasts between alternative and conventional production have become less explicit (2000). Guthman and her colleagues have described the dramatic scaling up of organic fruit and vegetable cultivation in California in a process of appropriation by what she terms ‘*agribusiness growers*’ (Buck et al., 1997). This accelerating trend has subsequently been referred to as the ‘conventionalisation’ thesis by which it is argued that some sectors of organic agriculture have begun to resemble conventional industrial agriculture (Guthman, 2000).

Guthman and others maintain that the founding tenets of organic agriculture have been weakened by governance processes such as the codification of organic growing practices through certification that has permitted the application of certain pesticides; the intensive and extensive cultivation of crops including the application of fertiliser inputs; the use of casual migrant labour; and routine long-distance transportation of organic produce (Allen and Kovach, 2000; Buck et al., 1997; Goodman, 2000; Guthman, 2004a&b). It is argued that these practices contradict the ethical stance of the movement’s founders and have resulted in a new category of ‘corporate organics’ (Johnston et al., 2009) or ‘organic lite’ (Guthman, 2004b). Consequently Goodman et al. contend that ‘(t)he ethics of ethical foodscapes can thus be ambiguous, slippery,

and consist of a number of interwoven layers' (2010:1783) of which CSAs, organic agriculture and supermarket chain stores are all disparate elements.

I began this chapter by introducing the concept of a moral economy and argued that all economies are a fusion of ethical and economic deliberations. I described a moral economy of food using the related concept of *Civic Agriculture* (Lyson, 2000) and argued that moral economies such as CSA exhibit an ethics of care at different scales of space and time (Wells and Gradwell, 2001). Lastly, I introduced the concept of an *ethical foodscape* and argued that the moral economy of food is positioned along a dynamic and contested continuum of ethics (Morgan, 2010). In the following section I describe the *moral economy of CSA* and discuss how it is also situated along this continuum.

5.3.4

A moral economy of CSA

With regard to Community Supported Agriculture, Feagan and Henderson maintain that '(t)he intent of the model is to provide members a place to develop *value concerns* and desires for social connections that go beyond *narrow market considerations*' (2009:205, my italics). Fieldhouse observes that '(i)t seems that people are willing to forego the quest for the cheapest food possible if they perceive *that other values are being upheld*' (1996:46, my italics) and Holloway et al. state that 'the relationship between producers and consumers... is presented as one emphasising closeness and connectedness' (2007:12). Consequently Wells and Gradwell claim that 'CSA growers and shareholder-members are *moral actors* in relation to the world' (2001:117; my italics). According to Kloppenburg et al.:

CSA represents a concrete example of the real possibility of establishing economic exchanges conditioned by such things as pleasure, friendship, aesthetics, affection, loyalty, justice and reciprocity in addition to the factors of cost (not price) and quality

(1996:7)

Thompson and Coskuner-Balli state that 'CSA consumption communities provide their members with a reassuring feeling of participating in an intimate and human-scaled market structure' (2007a:150) and O'Hara and Stagl contend that 'CSAs recover the *multi-dimensionality of markets* as places of social interaction' (2001:549, my italics). Consequently Hinrichs asserts that '(t)he CSA share then is an economic transaction suffused with trust' (2000:300). In Chapter 6 I demonstrate the multi-dimensionality of my case studies by describing different forms of market interaction between the CSAs and their members.

One of my interviewees at COCA related another member's account of their relationship to the CSA:

I love her thing which is that you pay the farmer, you pay to support the farm, and the veg comes free [smiles]

Maddy, COCA

The above quote emphasises the partnership and mutuality of CSA: 'you pay to support the farm, and the veg comes free'. Hendrickson and Heffernan contend that 'food becomes the expression of relationships that are *much more* than exchange relationships' (2002:364, my italics). At Hazlehurst the grower articulated the socially embedded relationships and supra-financial values that CSA embodies:

Well, I think people do get a lot out of it in terms of, it's things which aren't, kind of necessarily, the tangible things, um, you know, it's enjoyable volunteering or, um, you know, understanding how their food's produced and the issues involved, and events things. It's not actually, it's not material things, it's not, you know, sort of money in the wallet or food on the table, necessarily, I think

Bob, Hazlehurst

In particular, shareholders, as well as growers, internalise the risk of production; Feagan and Henderson argue that members are 'in a sense expanding their own economic interests to include the CSA farmer' (2009:205). Galt refers to this as 'an *equity* investment relationship... members share the risk of production in exchange for a share of the production' (2013:344, original italics). Hinrichs observes that risk is inherent because 'the precise correspondence of the share fee to the produce one will actually receive cannot be known until the growing season is over' (2000:301). Elsewhere, Allen has described CSA as '*a type of futures market... members are actually speculating on the crop* rather than purchasing food' (1999:125, my italics)¹⁰⁰. Consequently Hinrichs claims that '(e)ntering a relationship based on such indeterminacy requires some measure of trust' (2000:301).

Therefore CSA may be considered as a component of a moral economy of food because, by sharing the risk, it flattens the unequal economic relationship between producer and consumer. Consequently Hinrichs and Kremer have described CSA members as 'beyond mere consumers' (2002:71). However, Clare Hinrichs has argued that '(a)lthough it departs from the usual tenets

¹⁰⁰ CSA members in North America are unable to redeem SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) food stamps to purchase shares as shares cannot be quantified nor guaranteed (Allen, 1999)

of supply and demand pricing for individual goods, the share does have market referents' (2000:300). Hinrichs continues:

Farmers know (or quickly learn) what is necessary to cover their costs, pay themselves a living wage, and also make the capital improvements that will ensure the farm can survive over the long term. CSA members, for their part, expect good value for their purchase of a share

(ibid)

In the following section I provide a discussion of the *structural* tensions between a *moral economy of CSA* and the exigencies of the dominant market economy and the consumer expectations that it engenders. This section provides the theoretical framework for the two succeeding sections in which, using empirical material from my fieldwork, I describe in detail the moral ambiguities involved in establishing and subsequently operating a CSA scheme.

5.4.1

The structural tensions of CSA

DeLind argues that 'the logic of the commercial marketplace predominates in most CA¹⁰¹ projects. Or said somewhat differently, the logic of civic-ness is still a wished for second thought' (2002:219). In this section I argue that, in recent years, there has been a tendency for CSAs to make accommodations with the market economy that have, to a certain extent, compromised the founding ethical principles of Community Supported Agriculture. I draw on Hinrichs (2000) and Feagan and Henderson (2009) to depict approaches to decision-making within CSAs as either *instrumental* or *collaborative*, or more commonly within a compound *functional* category. I propose a model that positions individual CSA projects along a continuum that reflects their degree of economic (*instrumental*) versus ethical (*collaborative*) orientation. The continuum reflects the duality of CSA projects as they balance economic viability with ethical convictions.

Hinrichs cautions that even socially embedded markets such as CSAs operate within the capitalist political economy and contends that AFNs should not be romanticised as bastions of ethical practice (2000). Earlier I argued that all economies are hybrid entities comprising economic and ethical considerations. Drawing on the work of Block (1990), Hinrichs develops this argument by depicting AFNs along a continuum of *marketness* and *instrumentalism* (2000). Hinrichs argues that 'social embeddedness becomes a far more useful and nuanced concept,

¹⁰¹ Civic Agriculture

when it is joined by notions of marketness and instrumentalism' (2000:301). Winter also claims that there are 'different degrees and qualities of embeddedness' (2003a:24). According to Galt:

Marketness is the extent to which price as a singular and overriding factor determines market interactions, and *instrumentalism* is the extent to which individuals maximize their economic goals by engaging in opportunistic behavior. High *marketness* means that no other considerations interfere with the dominance of price in decision making, while low *marketness* indicates that nonprice considerations are more important. High *instrumentalism* occurs when people prioritize economic goals and engage in opportunistic behavior to achieve them, whereas low *instrumentalism* means that they prioritize non economic goals like friendship, family ties, morality, and spirituality
(2013:348, my italics)

CSAs that privilege moral as opposed to financial considerations can be considered as an example of low marketness and low instrumentalism. However, as the majority of CSA transactions are conducted within the capitalist economy, projects are obliged to adopt the 'the wily characteristics of enterprise' (Goodman, 2004:891): monetary conditions retain an importance in the moral economy of CSA projects. Consequently Fieldhouse observes that 'CSAs are ultimately based on economic exchange' (1996:46) and Obach and Tobin state that '(c)ivic agriculture is still agriculture, the production of a good primarily for the purposes of exchange' (2014:318). Hinrichs maintains that '(s)ocial ties and personal connections in no way preclude instrumental behaviors or the relevance of price' (2000:296). Therefore all CSAs continually balance the competing demands of ethics and economics along a continuum of *marketness* and *instrumentalism* (DeLind, 1999; Hinrichs, 2000).

5.4.2

The Changing Face of CSA

In North America authors such as Laura DeLind have referred to the 'split personality' of CSA (1999); Goland states that CSAs are simultaneously 'an option for withdrawing from the conventional marketplace' but also a substitute 'marketing arrangement' (2002:22). Hayden and Buck argue that 'the movement has split along two trajectories; some CSAs have become more strictly market oriented, running the business internally and requiring only payment from members, while others continue to strive for the integrated community vision' (2012:333). Schnell observes that in North America 'far more CSA farmers offer what could be termed "subscription farms," where members' up-front fee guarantees them a certain quantity of produce each week' (2007:558); thereby the financial risk of CSA is transferred back onto

farmers who provide a fixed veg-share regardless of weather conditions or the availability of labour, for example.

Therefore observers including Ryan Galt (2013) have suggested that some CSAs are beginning to adopt practices that mitigate their original principles drawing them closer to the practices of conventional agricultural production, marketing and distribution (Feagan and Henderson, 2009; Galt et al. 2011; Lang, 2010b; Loesch-Quentin, 2012). Some of the variation between CSAs reflects the diversity of projects; as long ago as 1999, DeLind and Harman Fackler were describing the “many faces” of CSA and Ostrom maintains that ‘the model is being adapted and applied in increasingly diverse forms’ (2007:102). However, for some CSA projects this apparent variety reflects a departure from the origins of the movement; Galt et al. state that ‘relying on markets alone means that the pernicious effects of competition... continue to erode the implementation and realization of the values that set AFNs apart from their conventional counterparts’ (2016:508).

Consequently the ethical dimensions of individual CSA projects vary considerably. A microcosm of the broader ethical foodscape of organic agriculture, it is argued that CSAs have also been subject to ‘conventionalisation’ (Busa and Garder, 2015); according to Galt et al., ‘some CSAs are taking on characteristics of “industrial organic” agriculture’ (2011:6). These variations are contingent with Smith’s description of the fracturing of the organic movement (2006); some elements of CSA are being captured by conventional markets whilst others reconfigure into entities that conform to the attributes of the original niche innovation. However the drivers for this trend are more complex than concerted co-option by corporate interests¹⁰². By 2003 DeLind was arguing that CSAs were increasingly catering to individual consumer choice by, for example, supplying bespoke vegetable and salad shares, offering breaks in subscriptions and providing door-to-door deliveries. In 2011 this perspective was reinforced by Galt et al.’s analysis of a sample of CSAs in California:

none have formal core groups of members that directly decide what to produce, none have mandatory community work days, most do not require members to visit the farm (although most have member events at their farms), many do not require a long minimum payment period, and many do not actually share much of the production risk with their members

(2011:6)

By contrast, both of my case studies were headed by executive bodies that were influential in decision-making regarding vegetable cultivation; both offered many opportunities for members

¹⁰² Chapter 6 explores the financial imperatives for CSAs to adapt

to participate although neither obligated members to attend; and both case studies shared some of the risk of production, although Hazlehurst and COCA each bought in produce to ensure a minimum share of staple vegetables to their members throughout the whole year. Neither of my case studies demanded an extended subscription period, or advance payment beyond a month, but both requested a minimum notice period if members wished to leave the scheme.

Liz Henderson, a founding member of the CSA movement in the North America, has written that CSAs are increasingly fostering convenience over commitment citing a quasi-CSA operation in California that promotes its service as “Customer Friendly, Flexible, Convenient — Cancel anytime — No commitment” (2012). Such schemes are effectively aggregators that buy produce from farmers and sell it through door-to-door veg-box deliveries, thereby removing the direct relationship between the consumer and the producer. One CSA farmer in Ohio, echoing Guthman’s ‘organic lite’ inscription (2004b), has referred to similar opportunist operators as ‘fake CSAs’ and has created a corresponding Facebook page (*see figure 36*) (Goodman, 2014):



Figure 36: *If You Don't Know Your Farmer You Are Not in a Csa* source:

https://www.facebook.com/ifyoudontknowyourfarmeryouarenotinacsa/timeline?ref=page_internal

By contrast Steve Pedersen of High Ground Organics, California only provides one standard size of veg-share for thirty-six weeks of the year when his crops are in season; he described it as a 'truer' notion of CSA than the recent trend of 'giving people what they want'¹⁰³.

5.4.3

A continuum of economic and ethical orientation

In the final part of this second section of the chapter I propose a model that enables analysis of CSAs in terms of the diversity of CSA practices and ethical positions that reflect the current state of Community Supported Agriculture as it has evolved over the last thirty years. Feagan and Henderson in their study of a CSA in Ontario, Canada developed a three-part typology of approaches adopted by CSAs that they categorised as *instrumental*, *functional*, and *collaborative* (2009). By *instrumental* they describe a CSA as privileging commercial objectives: 'beliefs and behaviors are primarily based on traditional narrow economic and utilitarian calculus' (ibid:207). At the opposite end of the spectrum, *collaborative* CSAs place an emphasis on the ethical dimensions of the operation: '(t)he relationship between CSA farmers and members is perceived as a partnership' and '(t)his approach is the closest to the goals and philosophies of early CSA' (ibid:208). In the middle of the continuum are CSAs labelled as *functional* that straddle the two previous categories to varying degrees. Galt has referred to this spectrum of approaches as 'the equity-commodity continuum' referring to CSA's compound of ethics and economics (2013:344).

Following their research in California, Allen et al. have questioned whether alternative food initiatives are 'a new structural configuration - a shifting of plates in the agrifood landscape' or 'incremental erosion at the edges of the political-economic structures that currently constitute those plates?' (2003:61). Feagan and Henderson draw on Hassanein's discussion of incremental versus transformational change in alternative food systems (2003); the authors argue that the evolution of CSAs over the decades can either be portrayed as 'necessary adaptation and accommodation to context' or 'weakening and compromise' (Feagan and Henderson, 2009:206). "Movement farmers" (Goodman, 2000:218) such as Steve Pedersen in California contend that the accommodation of mainstream market practices, such as offering a variety of veg-shares or allowing breaks in subscription, are a failure of CSAs to influence the hegemonic food system. Alternately Hassanein maintains that pragmatic adaptation to circumstances can be conceived of as 'the achievement of what is presently possible coupled with ongoing inquiry by an active and informed citizenry' (2003:85). Thus, in the context of CSA, it can be argued that

¹⁰³ Author's field-notes from CSA Farm tour in California on 22nd January 2013 organised by Urgenci in collaboration with Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF)

farmers are optimising the marketing of their produce to an engaged and supportive membership.

Although Feagan and Henderson were specifically relating the three categories of their typology to how sharing and support between farmers and CSA members can be conceptualised, I propose that the model of *instrumental*, *functional*, and *collaborative* CSA approaches can be applied to the broader ethical versus economic duality of CSAs. Therefore I depict a continuum of CSA approaches: (see figure 37):

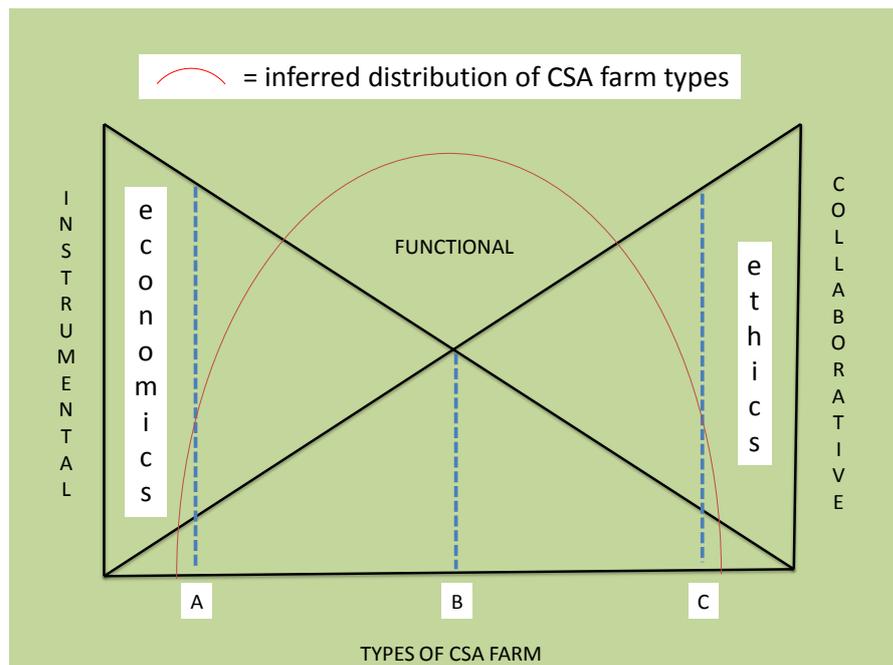


Figure 37: A continuum of the economic and ethical orientation of CSAs (adapted from Feagan and Henderson, 2009:207)

Key to the types of CSA farm:

A = an *instrumental* farm that is predominantly commercial in outlook

B = a *functional* farm that combines economic and ethical considerations

C = a *collaborative* farm that privileges ethics over economics

In reality most CSA farm approaches are neither exclusively *instrumental* nor *collaborative*, but lie within the *functional* range across the middle of continuum (red line of inferred distribution) because the *moral economy of CSAs* are a fusion of economic and ethical considerations.

Furthermore, in respect of *instrumental* approaches, Andr ee et al. have argued that ‘overestimating this tendency may conceal the more progressive and potentially transformative rationalities that food activism also produces’ (2015:1468). In Chapter 7 I discuss the radical

potential of Community Supported Agriculture to promote resilience and contribute to transition to a more sustainable and localised form of agriculture.

In the second section of this chapter I have outlined a *moral economy of CSA* describing how members share the risks and rewards of CSA with farmers by participating in ‘a type of futures market’ (Allen, 1999:125) that Hinrichs describes as ‘a “softened” a form of exchange’ (2000:301). However, I then argued that even socially embedded markets such as CSAs are based on economic exchange (Sage, 2003). Galt, in a Marxist interpretation, argues that CSA shares remain a capitalist commodity because they generally retain an exchange value paid as money (2013). I then described a trend that I characterised as ‘*the changing face of CSA*’ (Lang, 2010a, my italics). I asserted that the founding philosophy and ethics of CSA, such as risk-sharing and direct relationships between the producer and consumer, have been diluted as CSAs seek to compete in the marketplace described by Groh and McFadden as ‘the vast and jangling context of global industrialization’ (1997:59). Following Hinrichs (2000), I argued that the *moral economy of CSA* is attenuated by a combination of *marketness* and *instrumentalism*. I then mobilised Feagan and Henderson’s (2009) three-part typology of CSA approaches, categorised as *instrumental*, *functional*, and *collaborative*, to argue that CSAs can be positioned along a continuum that situates their ethical versus economic orientation.

In the following sections of this chapter I discuss *moral* and *operational* tensions at my case studies that demonstrate shifts across this *instrumental/collaborative* continuum as the executive bodies of my case studies sought to combine ethical convictions with financial and pragmatic considerations in the everyday practice of the CSA. Both of the ethical approaches of my case studies are the aggregate perspectives of the executive bodies, rather than the opinion of individual farmers such as Feagan and Henderson encountered in Canada (2009).

5.5.1

The moral tensions of CSA

This is the first of two sections in this chapter that draw on my empirical fieldwork to explore different ethical tensions and conflicts within my CSA case studies. This first section describes how *moral* tensions regarding the vision of each CSA were negotiated by the key participants that formed the executive bodies of my case studies. The following section examines *operational* tensions that describe how the ethos of administering a CSA was challenged as the projects developed. I use these illustrations of the *moral economy* of my case studies to consider the transformative potential of Community Supported Agriculture.

Although the first CSA initiative was established in the UK in 1994 (Cox et al., 2008), growth of the movement has been slow compared to North America where there are now believed to be

in excess of 6000 schemes (LocalHarvest, 2015). By comparison, there are fewer than 100 functioning CSAs in the UK at present (Soil Association, 2011b). Therefore, the UK CSA movement, in terms of scale, is still immature and there is no equivalent literature to that in North America which recounts the trajectory of CSA expansion and development¹⁰⁴. Consequently, from their outset neither of my two case studies had any obvious example to emulate. Neither was geographically close to another CSA project and none of the participants of either case study had first-hand experience of either establishing or administering a CSA. However, each CSA had to identify the ‘*what*’ and ‘*how*’ of their vision. Despite both groups receiving professional advice from practitioners in the field of CSA, to a large extent the two groups effectively improvised their collective visions of what the CSA should stand for and how it would operate.

For my case study in west Wales the ‘*what*’ and ‘*how*’ proved to be comparatively straightforward as the Core Group predominantly shared consistent and compatible views that were practical to operationalize within their particular setting on an existing organically certified farm. When differences did arise, the opinion of the farmer generally prevailed primarily because he was the land-owner and, secondly, he had initially conceived of the project:

Gareth came up with the big idea of CSA, came to that meeting, described it to the six of us that were there

Maddy, COCA

Furthermore, with the exception of volunteer labour and seeds, the farmer provided most of the necessary resources, such as land, machinery and his own labour to institute the project. This created a relationship between the farmer and the Core Group that was not always transparent as this interviewee and subscriber observed:

(T)here’s this problem with who is it, who is doing it? Is it Gareth.....or is it the Core Group? And I think this is, and I’m, I’m, I like Gareth very much and I’d like it to be a success, but I, and that’s why I keep out of the Core Group because I can’t, it’s just not something right for me, the whole thing, the structure of it¹⁰⁵

Jean, COCA

¹⁰⁴ Populist handbooks on Community Supported Agriculture in North America include Groh and McFadden (1997) and Henderson and Van En (2007)

¹⁰⁵ There were many instances at COCA when the boundary between the working farm at Caerhys and the CSA within it were blurred and confused. For instance, I experienced this first-hand as Treasurer when bills for diesel had to be estimated as a proportion of the overall farm spend

Jean articulates her belief that oversight of the CSA resides with the farmer but strategy is implemented by members who formed the Core Group, of which the farmer was also a member. A member of the Core Group voiced her concern that monthly Core Group meetings were usually held at Caerhys farmhouse further reinforcing the impression of farm ownership, although subsequent meetings were rotated at other members' homes in an attempt to address this bias. However, despite this underlying tension there was considerable coherence and shared vision amongst the group of individuals that formed COCA's Core Group:

Our attitude at COCA has just been, we can either sit down and plan for a year, or we can just do it

Ben, COCA

You know we had this discussion: "Shall we wait until we get funding or shall we just start?" and the consensus was: "Well, hell, let's just get started" which we did and we had a first meeting at which people came along, signed up, it was a lovely day, we shared lunch

Maddy, COCA

Once the Core Group coalesced after the original suggestion from the farmer of a CSA type of growing scheme, a decision was rapidly taken to begin taking subscriptions from prospective members in order to capitalise the first season of production. Significantly this was in advance of any horticultural activity; members were investing in a potential future crop:

Even though there no veg, umm, a few of us decided to give 30 pounds a month to get it going

Ben, COCA

The Core Group and other committed individuals began to pay monthly subscriptions in order to purchase seeds to produce the first harvest of crops. Furthermore it was necessary for many of the same members to volunteer their labour to assist the farmer and his son on the land. COCA operated in this informal way for two years before the Core Group deemed that the scheme was sufficiently viable to employ the farmer's son part-time and it was not until the following year that the CSA was incorporated as a legal entity. Therefore there was considerable commitment to the scheme from a dedicated Core Group and other supportive members and a regular harvest was achieved from the first year of its inception.

By contrast, at Hazlehurst there existed a much broader spectrum of opinion and attitudes:

Errm, a lot of people went up to the - from initial meetings – all with different ideas what they could do on the site, there was no agreement, at that point, what it was going to be for

Damian, Hazlehurst

Ultimately the combination of personalities and the extent and disparity of visions at Hazlehurst led to disunity and discord within the Steering Group that required external mediation. Two key areas of debate in the formative months of Hazlehurst CSA concerned the *governance* of the CSA and whether it should adopt principles of *permaculture*¹⁰⁶ including the integration of animals in the management of the land.

5.5.2

Governance

Unlike COCA, Hazlehurst didn't attach itself to an existing agricultural entity such as Caerhys Farm. A philanthropic land-owner agreed to hold the land for an agreed period until the Steering Group that preceded the Management Committee of Hazlehurst could raise sufficient funds to purchase it through a share offer¹⁰⁷. The Steering Group of Hazlehurst received advice from Co-operatives UK¹⁰⁸ on the most appropriate form of governance. Hazlehurst were advised to incorporate as a cooperative in order to be able to accept share payments from the public, apply for funding from external bodies, and employ a grower. Incorporation also limits the financial liability of those members who serve on the executive body. Consequently there began an extended period of deliberation:

And then the rules discussion broke out. Uugh, God!

Richard, Hazlehurst

What was really dominating the discussion for what seemed like months and months was which form, which system of rules to use

Nancy, Hazlehurst

Some key members of the Steering Group were committed to establishing Hazlehurst as a Multi-stakeholder Co-operative, also known as the Somerset Rules, because they resolutely

¹⁰⁶ 'The word 'permaculture', was coined by Australians Bill Mollison and David Holmgren during the 1970s... (p)ermaculture is a design system which aims to create sustainable food, resource and community systems by following nature's patterns' (King, 2008:118)

¹⁰⁷ The Steering Group of Hazlehurst had approximately a year to raise the land purchase price of circa £80,000

¹⁰⁸ Co-operatives UK is the national body that campaigns for co-operation and works to promote, develop and unite co-operative enterprises

Source: <http://www.uk.coop/about/co-operativesuk>

believed that it enshrined principles of social justice that were central to the establishment of the project:

The Multi-stakeholder Co-operative (Somerset Rules)

The Somerset Rules permit different stakeholder groups to have a *balanced* voice in the business. If your enterprise serves more than one distinct group of beneficiaries (for example, producers and consumers) *you can ensure that neither group can dominate* – even when the number of members from each group is very different

source: Somerset Rules:<http://www.somerset.coop/node/17>, my italics

Henderson and Van En maintain that ‘CSA is a hybrid enterprise blending worker control and customer control. No universal formula or recipe exists for creating a CSA’ (2007:75). At Hazlehurst some Steering Group members strongly advocated a *collaborative* approach that guaranteed social justice for every member of the intended CSA community, including the professional growers. These members argued that a conflict of interest could arise between those that grew the vegetables and those that subscribed to the scheme; they promoted the Somerset Rules because they believed this form of governance would prevent the potential exploitation of the few agricultural workers by the numerous, relatively wealthy, subscribers to the scheme. Hinrichs and Kremer concur: ‘CSA is based on an ideal of reciprocity, but in practice the interests of a relatively elite shareholder group can take precedence over those of the CSA farmer’ (2002:72).

This group on the Steering Group argued that it wasn’t necessarily in the interests of subscribers to support a fair wage for the farmers because it would affect the price of a veg-share. Others, following the advice of Co-operatives UK, wished to adopt a more widely endorsed and less elaborate set of governance rules that afforded less protection to the growers but were easier to implement and administer in the long-term; this alternative ethical vision can therefore be portrayed as a *functional* approach to the CSA as they balanced ethical considerations with financial concerns regarding the cost of future veg-shares. Consequently, as discussions evolved two distinct and staunch positions developed between a minority in favour of the Somerset Rules and the majority who preferred a more straightforward model, or were simply uninterested in the debate:

(T)here was some, quite a lot of upsets and difficulties, inter-personal difficulties

Sasha, Hazlehurst

(E)veryone has this little bit of ego that wants their way and they think their way is better than others

Richard, Hazlehurst

As the participants and standpoints became increasingly polarised and entrenched it was necessary to seek professional intervention to mediate the situation:

We had a, a morning facilitated, do you know James Curran – he's a process-orientated psychologist, um, to help us with our dynamics really, we just got stuck

Sasha, Hazlehurst

It took a long time to get a group to agree on a set of actions because it had to resolve and work through stuff

Karen, Hazlehurst

This ethical debate about the nature of the governance had unintended and unfortunate consequences for the development of Hazlehurst. Firstly, in contrast to COCA who produced a veg-share for members during its first year, the key participants at Hazlehurst allowed the issue to dominate an entire year's proceedings:

I can't remember the exact timescale now. This talking, talking about rules, we missed a deadline for ordering stuff to grow, you know, so more or less a season, a season went by really

Nancy, Hazlehurst

Secondly, it contributed to a significant delay in launching the scheme resulting in a perceived loss of momentum:

(B)ecause we'd been underground in a way, working on all this stuff, getting all the organisation ready,... there wasn't the buzz that there was at the start, people were feeling tired, tired because of the grind of getting the thing done

Richard, Hazlehurst

Ultimately the Somerset Rules were adopted but not without arousing further rancour amongst the Steering Group and its close associates:

I just agreed for the sake of peace...

Nancy, Hazlehurst

(T)he majority of us caved in

Richard, Hazlehurst

Although the Somerset Rules promoted social justice for CSA farmers, another Steering Group member voiced her concerns regarding the practicality of their adoption:

(W)e'd signed up to a way of working with the Somerset Rules cooperative which meant that, unless everyone agreed, nothing could happen... It may lead to an inverted commas 'better outcome' and I have some personal reservations about whether that's true or not. I think it also leads to a fear about anybody being a leader in any way which, um, I don't think is a positive thing

Karen, Hazlehurst

Furthermore, two members, including the person who had been most in favour of the Somerset Rules, felt obliged to leave the project as a result of the decision:

It was one of the, the meeting that agreed the rules, it was a, kind of, conditions on which they agreed the rules was that I wasn't involved...

Mark, Hazlehurst

5.5.3

Permaculture

The second key debate and area of contestation for the Steering Group surrounding the ethical vision of Hazlehurst concerned whether to adopt *permaculture*, including livestock, as a form of land management at the growing site.

(T)hen we had a lot of debate about, um, animals

Sasha, Hazlehurst

(I)t's a sort of controversial issue that people wanted to avoid

Richard, Hazlehurst

One group within the Steering Group promoted the principles of permaculture arguing that the presence of animals would reduce or avoid the need to pay for costly inputs such as manures to raise the fertility of the soil. At the Hazlehurst growing site this was a particular issue as the land had been intensively cultivated previously and also suffered from compaction by sheep grazing and therefore required large amounts of manure to revitalise the composition and structure of the soil:

Now, alongside this was a discussion of animals or vegetables. Now, to me, um, from a land-management point of view and from a, a gradually building up to things point of view, it would have been better to have had animals on the land first

Nancy, Hazlehurst

However a rival group, who also comprised some vegetarians, were opposed to the inclusion of livestock in the scheme on ethical grounds. This was another debate that in one member's words: "rolled on and on and on". The situation was compounded when the project ultimately employed a vegan grower:

I was very annoyed about that, I was very annoyed... I'm mentally detaching myself

Nancy, Hazlehurst

Eventually a decision was taken not to include animals along permaculture principles at Hazlehurst:

(S)o we're concentrating on vegetables, that was the agreement, we'll work towards vegetables in the short to medium term and then possibly think about it afterwards

Richard, Hazlehurst

(T)here are a core of people who have remained, obviously [smiles], who didn't want any of that, they wanted to be growing fruit and veg for the community through, preferably, a box scheme and that's the vision that's, that's maintained itself all this time. Without that, probably, maybe nothing would have ever happened at all

Damian, Hazlehurst

The debate concerning permaculture at Hazlehurst provides another example of the tension between ethics and economics. Arguably, the *collaborative* approach representing the ethics of vegetarianism prevailed over the *instrumental* financial argument to include animals as a means of defraying the costs of manure on the growing site. Damian seems to present growing vegetables without the use of animals as an abiding principle that was defended: 'that's the vision that's, that's maintained itself'.

However, vegetarianism reflects a particular ethical position that was challenged by those proponents of permaculture values. Morgan has argued in the context of food miles and Fair Trade that ethics cannot be essentialised as 'good or 'bad' (2010); the benefits of reducing the

distance that food travels will not be transferable to distant producers in developing countries. Furthermore, there were also expedient financial reasons for rejecting animals on the land at Hazlehurst such as the additional cost of husbandry. Although the choice to veto permaculture can be portrayed as one aspect of a *collaborative* (ethical) approach, it also comprised different facets that were *instrumental* (economic) and is therefore more accurately located as a *functional* approach that embraces aspects of both extremes along ‘the equity-commodity continuum’ (Galt, 2013:344). Finally, it was also a pragmatic decision; it wasn’t practical to raise animals on a remote site such as Hazlehurst. “You’ve got to be sensible”, a Steering Group member told me.

In this preceding section I have discussed *moral* tensions that emerged as my case studies sought to establish a working vision for their new CSA projects. The debates at Hazlehurst surrounding *governance* and *permaculture* both demonstrate the ethical fault-lines beneath the landscape of an apparently uncomplicated model of Civic Agriculture such as CSA. These tensions also reflect the continuum of CSA approaches because neither the selection of the Somerset Rules, nor the rejection of Permaculture, can be regarded as wholly *collaborative* or *instrumental*, thereby comprising a *functional* approach that combines ethical and economic deliberations. Earlier in the chapter I also described subtler divisions between the farmer and the Core Group at COCA regarding the function of *governance*.

The *moral* tensions that I observed at my case studies affected the resilience of the schemes. At Hazlehurst a growing season was lost and key members of the Steering Group departed depleting the human capital of the scheme, although arguably leaving an executive body that was more in accord with each other. At COCA the lack of transparency concerning leadership of the CSA discouraged some interested individuals from assisting with the scheme: ‘that’s why I keep out of the Core Group’ (p.154). In the previous chapter I argued that *community* is a central tenet of Community Supported Agriculture. However the small group of individuals that comprised the *community* of the CSA executive bodies formulated the *moral economy* and, consequently, influenced and determined the transformative potential of each case study. Therefore although *community* is an asset of CSA, it may also hinder its potential, depending on the combination and consensus of its participants.

In the final section of this chapter concerning the *moral economy of CSA* I outline some of the decisions that key participants on the executive bodies of my case studies confronted as they attempted to balance the ethical and economic demands of operating a CSA in the dominant capitalist market-place.

5.6.1

The operational tensions of CSA

In an earlier section of this chapter I developed an argument that the founding principles of CSA have, to a certain extent, been compromised as individual projects modify their practices to accommodate the values of the market economy. In order to compete effectively and provide an attractive product to a wider audience some CSAs have increasingly adapted the original ethos of ‘sharing the harvest’ (Henderson and Van En, 2007). Cone and Myhre depict this condition as the “I” and “We” tension (2000:189); the “I” of the consumer accustomed to the values of choice, convenience and cost, counter to the “We” of a collective membership that seeks broader sustainable outcomes at extended scales of time and space. Seyfang and Smith maintain that ‘dominant individualist and consumerist lifestyle aspirations run counter to community collectivism’ (2007:599). However, the *moral economy of CSA* that differentiates it from conventional agriculture, including values such as mutuality, risk sharing and cooperation, informs the transformative potential of Community Supported Agriculture. In this final section I describe how COCA modified its CSA practices to conform to the expectations of its members, thereby compromising the transformative potential of the scheme.

One of the main challenges to the resilience of both of my case studies was member retention; the following email from an ex-subscriber at COCA typifies reasons for members leaving the scheme:

I do think COCA is a great idea and I am keen to support locally farmed produce but the overall costs, inconvenient location and defined days for collection outweigh overall benefits in this instance. I hope you find my views helpful and if these issues are addressed I may re join the scheme in the future.

With kind regards

Pamela

by email to the COCA Membership Secretary

Pamela expresses her belief in the ethics of CSA: ‘COCA is a great idea’, but demonstrates the equivocal and qualified *commitment* of some subscribers at my case studies. Weatherell et al. have depicted individuals who participate in local food strategies as ‘concerned consumers’ (2003); however, they state that ‘even for these individuals, trade-offs do take place between wider concerns and pragmatic factors’ (ibid:242). In this last section of the chapter I demonstrate some of the ‘trade-offs’ that occurred between the executive bodies of my CSA

case studies and their membership. By contrast, in Chapter 6 I describe ‘trade-offs’ that CSA members undertake that I depict as a form of *sacrifice*.

5.6.2

Commitment

At the end of the second section of this chapter I proposed a model that characterised the different approaches of CSAs in relation to their ethical/economic duality. In the following section I describe in detail how one of my case studies adapted their operations to accommodate the preferences of their members. However, having advanced a model of *production* (CSA approaches) I first propose a second model that exemplifies *consumption* (CSA subscribers). Drawing on the work of Lund et al. (2013), I deploy their six-part segmentation of Danish organic consumers to produce a three-part typology of subscribers that complements my previous model of CSA approaches (Feagan and Henderson, 2009). I use this model to illustrate the approaches adopted by one of my CSA case studies as it attempted to capture and retain membership during its formative years of operation.

Lund et al. used ‘qualitative and quantitative data... regarding actual purchases of organic food in order to make a psychographic profiling of organic consumers’ in Denmark (2013:454). The authors analysed data collected over a seven-year period from focus groups, in-depth interviews, panel data and questionnaires to produce a six-part segmentation of individuals:

Findings from focus groups and in-depth interviews identified six segments with reference to organic foods. Three of these are positively oriented towards organic foods – the ‘Convinced’, the ‘Positive and Food Involved’ and the ‘Positive and Convenient’ segments – while three further segments are either indifferent or sceptical

(Lund et al, 2013:460)

I contend that the two most positive segments determined by Lund et al. equate to a *collaborative* orientation as these consumers are most motivated by ethical concerns. The least positive and least negative of the six-part segmentation can be regarded as *functional* because they represent both ends of the continuum but are not strongly influenced by either ethics or economics. Lastly, I identify the most sceptical consumers as *instrumental* as they are most likely to participate in a CSA according to its cost as opposed to other values (*see figure 38*).

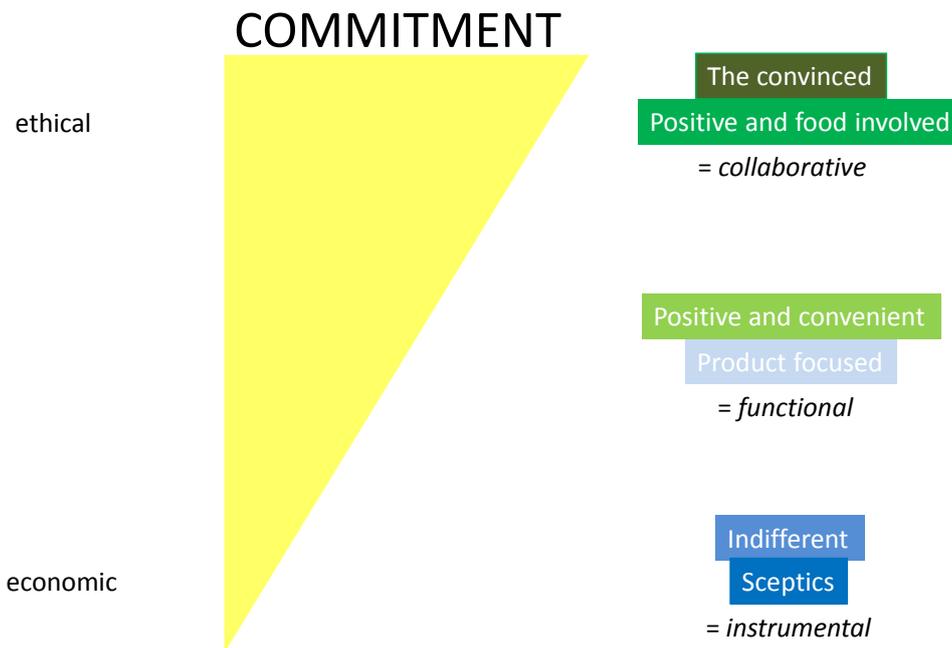


Figure 38: The spectrum of consumer commitment to CSA
(adapted from Lund et al., 2013)

Therefore, following Lund et al. (2013), I propose that CSA consumers can be placed along a spectrum of commitment that maps onto the continuum of approaches that CSAs adopt to meet the perceived needs and wants of these subscribers (Feagan and Henderson, 2009).

5.6.3

Collaborative, functional and instrumental subscribers

The *collaborative* subscribers may be characterised as “the believers”, a phrase that Emyr, the original Chair of COCA’s Core Group, used to describe its existing loyal membership. These interviewees at my case studies express their commitment to the principles of CSA:

(T)he objectives have always been inclusive, and wanting to make, you know, affordable healthy food for the local community, and to, to bring us in connection, back into connection with where our food comes from and to , to set it, to be part of a resilient food supply for Sheffield

Sasha, Hazlehurst

It’s a different way of living, actually

Sue, COCA

You kind of pay for your convictions, don't you?

Becky, Hazlehurst

Farnsworth et al. studied a CSA in Illinois; they state that 'CSA shareholders' social objectives dominated their decision to join. Standard economic objectives played a relative minor role' (1996:97). Nick Weir¹⁰⁹ speaking at the Hazlehurst AGM referred to his subscribers as 'environmental deep-greens'. However, amongst CSA members there are shades of green; Oberholtzer in her study of CSA in the Mid-Atlantic region of North America cites this farmer:

'(W)e have 29 members this year and maybe 5 of them get the entire picture - the environmental and social aspects of CSA'

(2004:10)

This sentiment was echoed by the grower at Hazlehurst:

Not everyone will 'get it', and inevitably some people who sign up will come from a consumerist mindset, demand bananas in their box, etc.

by email from the Hazlehurst grower to the Management Committee, 25th June 2012

As these remarks suggest, and in common with my previous model of CSA approaches, the majority of members can be categorised as *functional* subscribers situated around the centre of the spectrum of commitment; people are motivated to join the scheme because they want access to good quality, local, organic produce but are not necessarily engaged with the deeper social and environmental issues (Lang, 2010a). Weatherell et al. observe that the 'concerned consumers' they identified 'still rated product *intrinsic* factors and moral and health concerns as more important than origin when choosing food' (2003:242, my italics). The following interviewees typify this *functional* approach:

You are what you eat at the end of the day. That's one of the big drivers for us, really, is organic produce

Pete, COCA

(W)ell, the fact that's it local and the fact that it's fresh, they cut it on the same day that you get it, erm, and it's just had to come from down the road

Cheryl, Hazlehurst

At both of my case studies members of the executive bodies perceived subscribers as taking a *functional* approach to CSA:

¹⁰⁹ Founder-member of Stroud Community Agriculture (SCA); see Chapter 4 for a discussion of COCA's relationship with SCA (p.112)

Our subscribers are not committed to the project, they're just people who want a veg-box

Helen, Hazlehurst

(I)n this area you're not going to get people to understand... People are not satisfied when there's no vegetables to be had

Annie, COCA

Hudson has referred to the 'ideological imbalance' to describe the disparity between the extrinsic social and environmental ideals of CSA and the commitment of members that is conditional on intrinsic values such as the cost, taste, freshness and health characteristics of their veg-share (2005:12). In North America Ostrom observed that '(s)ome former members clearly understood and agreed with the larger principles behind csa, but a belief in such ideals was insufficient to sustain their participation if the quality was lacking' (2007:111). Similar concerns were articulated by this member of the Management Committee at Hazlehurst:

I think we'll have difficulty with loyalty. I don't think people are going to feel loyal to the scheme if the veg isn't good enough or there's not enough of it in the box

Helen, Hazlehurst

There were occasions during my fieldwork when the 'ideological imbalance' was vividly manifested; the following email was written by the farmer at COCA demonstrating his frustration with members who did not abide by their commitment to collect their veg-share on an August Bank Holiday weekend:

Dear All

Bad News !!!!

This week there have been NINE full shares left and TWO half shares which is very disappointing and insulting to the organic Veg.

I realise its bank holiday but its no excuse - they could at least inform us !!

There could be ELEVEN share less done !!

Now £100 of organic veg are fed to pigs - is this the future ?

More than anything those shares could have been shared to other members thus boosting up their share.

Yes I'm annoyed !!!!!

by email from Caerhys farmer to COCA members, 29th August 2013

The farmer fulfilled his responsibility to 'share the harvest' but eleven members failed to recognise their commitment to the project, particularly when it became inconvenient for them. Liz Henderson claims that members of CSAs are 'playing an immediate role in transforming the food system' that is '*beyond convenience*' (2012, my italics) whilst Goland states that '(w)hen convenience dominates, resistance gives way to consumerism' (2002:22).

These examples demonstrate how members often adopt an *instrumental* approach to CSA that is predicated on the quality and quantity of the product and its convenience. Over the Bank Holiday weekend members were even prepared to forego their veg-share because it was troublesome to collect. Goland asserts that: 'people who join a CSA simply because they want fresh organic vegetables are not likely to remain members for long' (ibid:23). The Membership Secretary at COCA reflected to me:

(Y)ou're only gonna get a certain type of person committed long-term

Pete, COCA

Forbes and Harmon, who conducted research in the North America, assert that CSA membership 'require(s) a certain amount of belief in and commitment to the philosophical ideals of the CSA concept' (2008:76). At both case studies I also encountered subscribers that could be defined as *instrumental*:

I know some people want to withdraw because they don't want to pay in, um,
when they're not getting much in the way of veg

Fiona, COCA

Another factor that has a negative impact is the fact that if I am away and do
not need the vegetables I still have to pay for them and in reality there are
going to be a few weekends in the year when I am away

by email to the Membership Secretary, COCA

The preceding quote discloses that the member is not prepared to pay for their veg-share year-round, thereby demonstrating a lack of commitment to the farmer and the CSA. In the same manner that CSAs constantly negotiate the ethical/economic duality in terms of satisfying their members, subscribers also balance the competing claims of their beliefs versus financial constraints:

I suppose if I was doing it sort of financially, purely financially, I probably
wouldn't go for a Hazlehurst bag, to be honest, err, but I suppose I kind of like
to support it

Cheryl, Hazlehurst

I'm feeding four of us and, you know, for me, forty pounds a month I could actually buy quite a lot of produce with that, and it is a bit like money down the drain and I'm doing it because I believe in the concept but there will come a point, really, when, financially, you just think: I'm not reaping enough from it

Annie, COCA

The grower at Hazlehurst also articulated this pervading tension between ethics and economics:

(I)f people don't have an ideological commitment to local food or organic or whatever, they find it hard to see why they should do it

Bob, Hazlehurst

I have used this preceding section to propose a model that situates consumers along a spectrum of commitment using the same typology of *instrumental*, *functional* and *collaborative* that I previously applied to my two CSA case studies as producers. I gave examples of how CSA members demonstrated their personal commitment along this spectrum ranging from those who can be characterised as “believers” (*collaborative*) to others whose commitment is dependent on the quality and quantity of their veg-share (*instrumental*). I argued that most subscribers adopt a *functional* approach to CSA membership. However I previously argued in Chapter 4 that the resilience of my case studies depended on a cohort of dedicated members who share the *interests*, or ethics, of Community Supported Agriculture and are also embodied in the *place* of CSA or, following Lund et al. (2013), can be positioned as *collaborative* members.

In the final section of this chapter I discuss some specific examples of strategies that COCA employed in an attempt to maintain and extend its customer base, and in what ways they diverged from its original principles and the ethos of Community Supported Agriculture, thereby compromising the transformative potential of the CSA.

5.6.4

‘Boxing-up’ and ‘remote hubs’

COCA is situated on the Pembrokeshire peninsula in west Wales. Its original objective was to serve the immediate neighbourhood surrounding St Davids establishing a localised, environmentally-sensitive food economy. This aspiration reflected the sustainable principles of St Davids Eco-City Group¹¹⁰, many of whose members comprised the founding Core Group of COCA^{111,112}. Despite gradually growing their membership year on year, COCA, like many other

¹¹⁰ See Chapter 3 for more information on St Davids Eco-City Group (p.54)

¹¹¹ The farmer at Caerhys originally made a presentation to St Davids Eco-City Group seeking their support to establish a CSA

¹¹² See Chapter 4 for a discussion of these overlapping communities (p.96)

CSAs, experienced member resignations. In an effort to address criticism of early difficulties and to prevent further loss of the membership, COCA's Core Group sought to respond to two particular sources of discontent.

Firstly, that the concept of literally 'sharing the harvest' on the day of harvest disadvantaged those members who were unable to come to the farm immediately to collect their veg-share. The harvest took place on a Friday afternoon and members were encouraged to collect their veg-share by the end of the weekend. The harvest was taken to a farm outbuilding known as the Share Shed and each crop was placed in a small silo (see figure 39).



Figure 39: Vegetable silos inside the Share Shed at COCA

Source: the author

Volunteers weighed every crop as it arrived and then divided the weight by the number of veg-shares to calculate a share of each crop. Members came to the Share Shed and used a set of scales to weigh out the different vegetables that comprised their individual veg-share (see figure 40). However, mistakes were common and frequently toward the end of the weekend particular crops were exhausted whilst some members still had to collect their veg-share. Consequently members expressed their dissatisfaction:

Pete,

We have after due thought decided to finish our membership of COCA at the end of this calendar year. On numerous occasions during the last few months we have been away from home and did not collect our vegetables and on quite a few other times have found that listed veg had already gone by the time we turned up to collect (normally Sunday).

We both believe that the COCA concept is good and hope the Group continues to thrive.

Regards,
Jane & Tim

by email to the COCA Membership Secretary, 4th September 2012



Figure 40: Scales and weights of veg-shares displayed on a blackboard at COCA¹¹³

Source: the author

¹¹³ Note the reference to the 'hungry gap' towards the bottom of the blackboard; I discuss this concept in Chapter 6 (p.234)

Secondly, an associated difficulty experienced by some members was the relatively remote location of the farm where COCA is situated. Many members complained of the time and fuel required to collect their share:

Hello Ben,

Would you be able to advise how I can give notice on our family share for COCA. Unfortunately the distance I live from COCA means that it is prohibitive for me to easily pick up my share every week.

Kind regards,

Libby Sutton

by email to the COCA Chair, 16th November 2013

The Core Group responded to these issues by collating individual veg-shares for members, or ‘*boxing-up*’ as it became known, and by creating what were referred to as ‘*remote hubs*’ where members could collect their share without travelling to the farm. Both responses were related to each other and, apart from addressing members’ immediate concerns, were intended to be part of a longer-term strategy to stimulate and retain membership of the CSA. I will describe each of these responses and in what way they compromised the founding principles of the concept of CSA, and COCA’s vision in particular.

COCA had already explored establishing a *remote hub* in nearby St Davids that was described as a ‘veg pick-up point’:

Pick up your veg share at St Davids market every Thursday

by [REDACTED] 26 July 2012 at 16:31

Posted In: COCA general, Distribution

COCA started with the idea that all members would pick up their veg share from Caerhys farm near Berea. However, we recognise that some people may find this too far to travel or may not have transport. To make it possible for more people to join in with COCA and enjoy healthy local vegetables we are launching a new veg pick-up point in St Davids.

posted by the Membership Secretary on COCA blog

Source: <http://www.coca-csa.org/blog>

For some time COCA had been experimenting with a weekly market stall in St Davids as a means of selling produce to create an additional income stream and, in the middle of summer, to dispose of the glut of produce that was in such surplus that it couldn’t be absorbed in members’ veg-shares; courgettes were especially typical of this category. The market stall generated

considerable discussion amongst the Core Group: some felt it was a useful means of publicising the scheme; others thought it was too time and labour-intensive and, in particular, corrupted the founding principle of ‘sharing the harvest’. A proportion of the project’s produce had to be reserved for the market in order to make it sufficiently viable in itself because it couldn’t be stocked entirely from surplus vegetables. Therefore economic (*instrumental*) deliberations of disposing of surplus produce at the market were prioritised over ethical (*collaborative*) considerations of ‘sharing the harvest’ wholly between those who made a commitment to membership of the CSA.

In response to members who voiced their concerns about the distance to the farm the Core Group responded by piloting a veg-share pick-up point at the weekly market in St Davids:

perhaps we could get ahead of the game and email all members asking if they would prefer a pick up point at the market (for a small surcharge?) and if so whether they would still attend events on the farm?

based on the feedback we could then tell members we will look into it. by doing this we would hopefully allay any wish from other members to pull out. I think we need to be responsive to members needs.

cheers,

Ben

by email from the Chair to COCA Core Group

However, as Treasurer of COCA I personally felt that the scheme also needed to extend its geographical range to gain more members and therefore increase its income. In my role of *observer as participant* (Dawson, 2010)¹¹⁴ I approached a wholefood shop in a nearby town to ask if they would be prepared to act as a *remote hub*. I reported this at a monthly Core Group meeting:

¹¹⁴ For more discussion of my researcher’s role as *observer as participant* see Chapter 3 (p.58)

Excerpt from Research Diary:

COCA Core Group meeting – 25.09.12, Caerhys Farm

I then presented the idea of a static hub at The Ark in Haverfordwest which lead to some debate about the ethos and philosophy of COCA; Ben raised the point that originally the intention of COCA was to feed the St Davids peninsula and that moving to Haverfordwest would broaden our scope and change the nature of the organisation. Ben thought that such a radical departure from the key ethos of COCA should be put to the membership

This concern was repeated at the following monthly Core Group meeting:

30th October 2012

The choice is to try and expand to Haverfordwest&Fishguard¹¹⁵ or to consolidate and carry on at current level with different expectations.

I favour consolidating and improving for 2013 growing season

I think:

Consolidation would enable us to change our focus from recruitment and the search for new members to concentrating on developing the ethos, procedures, and principles of our Caerhys Specific community supported agriculture.

We can concentrate on the quality & reputation needed to attract and hold onto members who aren't believers.

proposal from Emyr, Core Group member submitted at monthly meeting

Emyr argues that expanding the geographical range of COCA will infringe the 'ethos, procedures, and principles of our Caerhys Specific community supported agriculture'. He identifies individuals who are liable to leave due the scheme to practical problems such vegetable quality or distance to the farm as 'members who aren't believers', or have an *instrumental* rather than *collaborative* approach to membership of the CSA.

¹¹⁵ See figure 40

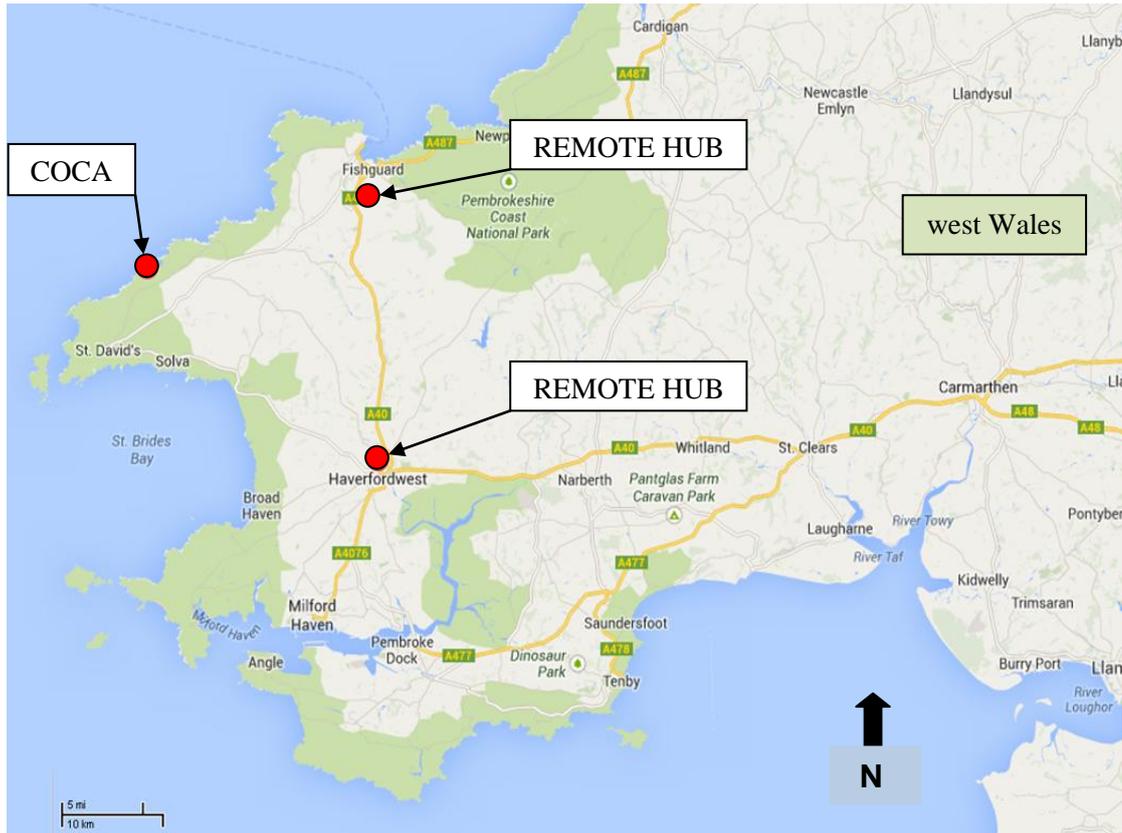


Figure 41: COCA and its remote hubs

Initially the Core Group held a consultation meeting in St Davids to gauge reaction from the membership to their proposals for *boxing-up* the share and creating *remote hubs*. After discussion it was decided to implement both strategies and the announcement was emailed to all subscribers:

The idea is to share the harvest out into named boxes. All you will need to do is transfer the veg to your own bag or basket leaving the box behind for re-use in subsequent weeks. Although weighing and packing each share is significant extra work, it will accomplish a number of things:

- ensure that each share has the right quantities - removing the problem of late collectors finding that something has run out.
- allow for small quantities of some items to be used - some shares will contain one item whilst others may contain an alternative, but each share will meet the objectives we have for shares.
- minimise wastage as all veg harvested will be shared out.
- facilitate the creation of remote hubs where a number of boxes are regularly transported to a pick up location other than Caerhys.

by email to CSA members from COCA Core Group

However, by adopting this more *instrumental* approach to distributing the veg-share, certain *collaborative* principles were discarded; in particular the creation of *remote hubs* severed the direct relationship between those who grow the produce and members who receive it. Some COCA members were averse to the Core Group proposals believing that they compromised the ethics of the project:

Unfortunately the quality of produce isn't great and if it is to become a box scheme rather than a CSA then it represents even less value for money.

Unfortunately Sally & I have come to the sad decision to leave COCA and this is based purely on a value for money basis. It has not been an easy decision as we believe in the principles behind what you are trying to achieve, we also feel that becoming a box scheme will veer COCA into just a commercial enterprise.

We do wish COCA and Caerhys all the luck in the world.

Best wishes, David & Sally

by email to the COCA Membership Secretary, 12th April 2013

Significantly, these ex-members draw a distinction between a CSA and a veg-box scheme, perceiving the latter to be 'just a commercial enterprise'. However they also exhibit a personal dilemma regarding their beliefs concerning the CSA versus essentially economic considerations: 'we believe in the principles behind what you are trying to achieve' but their decision 'is based purely on a value for money basis'. Therefore these members make an *instrumental* choice to leave the CSA although it makes them 'sad' to surrender their *collaborative* principles.

When the Core Group took the decision to box-up veg-shares (*see figure 42*) some members felt they were losing a connection with the harvest process that re-positioned their veg-share closer to an anonymous veg-box¹¹⁶; an aspect of provenance was abandoned in the process of homogenisation. Core Group members were also concerned that members were not sufficiently engaged with the source of their produce and that the implementation of boxes threatened to further dissociate subscribers from the realities of the growing environment. Therefore some members of the Core Group perceived this as a threat to the concept of Civic Agriculture and community participation that I discussed in Chapter 4. *Boxing-up* comprised a pragmatic *instrumental* decision to attempt to secure members who were dissatisfied with the quality and quantity of their veg-share but it impinged on the *collaborative* principles of connection and

¹¹⁶ For example, see Abel and Cole's national veg-box scheme: <http://www.abelandcole.co.uk/>

participation that distinguish Community Supported Agriculture from other marketing channels and that COCA sought to promote.



Figure 42: A boxed-up veg-share at COCA

Source: the author

In addition, some members especially enjoyed the embodied process of weighing their share:

(P)art of the getting it is going, is the handling it, it's my children's numeracy skills by seeing them on the scales and if it goes round to the big number two, and, you know, counting out how many cucumbers we can have, talking about the different size of tomatoes

Sue, COCA

Other members also opposed *boxing-up* because it effectively set the conditions for *remote hubs* and the potential for scaling-up and scaling-out of the project beyond the St Davids peninsula, thereby compromising one of the original objectives of the CSA:

(M)aybe we're trying to grow and we should actually just become better at what we're doing, more organised and more efficient and not try and do all these, you know, expand hugely and grow for hundreds of people when we need to get it right to start with

Debbie, COCA

Remote hubs were perceived by some on the Core Group as a process of dislocation from the farm, another form of distancing between producer and consumer that contradicted one of the principal aims of CSA to serve the neighbourhood closest to the farm (*see figure 43*). Debbie emulates these founding ethics by arguing that COCA should not expand beyond its immediate setting. However the language she uses to justify this position reflects a more *instrumental* approach to improving the operation of the CSA: 'we should... become... more organised and more efficient'. This proposition was also endorsed by another ex-Core Group member with business experience:

But I suppose what I mean is adapt [emphasises] our concept, of how we see this particular CSA... we have got to look more professional, we have got to supply a service and we've got to maintain that service, I think, for it to work

Annie, COCA

Annie emphasises the commercial aspects of running the COCA: 'we have got to look more professional, we have got to supply a service'. Annie's opinion is congruent with my previous argument that CSAs are sacrificing some of their *collaborative* principles and adopting *instrumental* practices in order to attract and retain membership. Franklin et al. have argued that '(i)n order for a business model to be financially viable within a particular place, it may be that the original social or environmental goals have to be curtailed once trading has begun' (2011:784). Ultimately COCA implemented the *boxing-up* scheme and introduced *remote hubs* at two sites; *boxing-up* was considered a success because it gave all members access to equal veg-shares and avoided waste, although it created extra labour for the grower and a small team of dedicated volunteers.

Get your share of
seasonal fresh
organic produce
every week of the year



Caerhys Organic Community Agriculture (COCA) is run for and by its members. We grow vegetables on an organic farm near St Davids and share the weekly harvest. We also share the risks and rewards of growing our food locally and sustainably.

COCA members enjoy:

- locally-produced, organic vegetables fresh from the field.
- fewer 'food miles', less packaging and ecologically sensitive farming practices.
- connecting with the land and people who grow their food. There is no obligation to help on the farm, but you can if you wish!
- supporting a local farm – providing our grower with a secure income and fairer return for their efforts.

Anyone can become a COCA member and share in the harvest. Sign up to receive your own veg share at The Ark every week. For more details visit our website or contact:

Membership Secretary

secretary@coca-csa.org
www.coca-csa.org



Figure 43: Promotional poster for the Ark remote hub in Haverfordwest, west Wales

However, there were still lingering misgivings amongst some of original members of the Core Group:

I can see our share system is beginning to break down, we're not sharing the harvest now between people, we're sharing it between the membership, the market stall and the hub, that's not really a CSA

Maddy, COCA

Nost studied adjustments made by three CSAs in the Midwest of North America that he styled as different forms of 'commodity practice', such as operating within the seasons and the management of sharer expectations; he contends that the hybridity of farm-based responses he observed 'are not necessarily incongruent with the aims of the movement' (2014:152). Furthermore, Feagan and Henderson claim that 'evidence of adaptation and situated learning,

and retention of the local and organic as core traits, speak to the pragmatic yet transformative potential of CSA' (2009:203). In Chapter 7 I reflect on the transformative potential of CSA in greater detail. In the final section of this chapter I have described how the Core Group of COCA adapted the original model of the CSA scheme by introducing the practices of *boxing-up* and *remote hubs*. These strategies incorporated members' *instrumental* expectations regarding quality, quantity and access to veg-shares whilst preserving the practical integrity of COCA, but they also compromised some of the *collaborative* ethical foundations of the scheme.

5.7

Conclusions

I began this chapter by introducing the concept of a *moral economy* and arguing that all economies are a fusion of ethical and economic deliberations. I described a moral economy of food using the concept of *Civic Agriculture* (Lyson, 2000) and I discussed how moral economies such as CSA exhibit an ethics of care at different scales of space and time (Wells and Gradwell, 2001). I then introduced the concept of an *ethical foodscape* and argued that the moral economy of food is positioned along a shifting and contested continuum of ethics (Morgan, 2010).

In the following section I described a *moral economy of CSA* and described the '*equity investment relationship*' (Galt, 2013:344, original italics) whereby members share the risk of production with CSA growers. I then drew on Hinrichs to argue that socially embedded markets such as CSAs are moderated by *marketness* and *instrumentalism* (2000). In this context I outlined a trend that has been described as '*the changing face of CSA*' (Lang, 2010a, my italics) as CSAs adapt their practices to members' expectations in the context of the market economy. I proposed that CSAs undertake different approaches to everyday moral and economic considerations that can be positioned along an *instrumental/collaborative* continuum reflecting the degree to which CSAs are financially or ethically orientated (Feagan and Henderson, 2009).

In the final two sections of the chapter I used empirical observations to provide a description of tensions specific to the context of my case studies: at Hazlehurst I outlined *moral* tensions that arose as the key participants initially sought to formulate the aims and vision of the CSA using the examples of *governance* and *permaculture* to illustrate ethical fault-lines amongst the Steering Group. I demonstrated how the choices made at Hazlehurst can be positioned along Feagan and Henderson's continuum of CSA approaches, although both examples indicate primarily *functional* approaches combining ethical and economic considerations (2009).

Lastly, I described implicit *operational* tensions for CSAs as they seek to attract and retain a membership whilst attempting to espouse a form of agriculture that promotes values beyond

choice, convenience and cost. I used Lund et al.'s (2013) six-part segmentation of Danish organic consumers to situate CSA members along a spectrum of consumer commitment that complemented Feagan and Henderson's (2009) model of CSA approaches. I described how the founding principles of COCA were challenged and compromised as COCA Core Group members sought to retain its subscribers and secure the practical integrity of the scheme through adopting the strategies of *boxing-up* and *remote hubs*.

I argued that principles such as mutuality, risk-sharing, commitment and 'sharing the harvest' comprised the *moral economy of CSA* and signalled collectively its transformative potential to contribute to transition to a more sustainable and localised form of agriculture. However I illustrated strategies which were undertaken to accommodate members that demonstrate how CSA schemes remain resilient by continually negotiating the ethics and economics of Community Supported Agriculture. My case studies employed a range of *instrumental* and *collaborative* approaches along a spectrum of moral and economic duality that moderate and mitigate the transformative potential of Community Supported Agriculture to different degrees.

Economic viability is also fundamental to the resilience of CSA schemes and comprises a major theme of CSA literature in North America. In the final results Chapter 6: *Viability, Capacity and Sacrifice* I explore in greater depth how CSAs remain economically viable in terms of the collective *capacity* of CSAs, and a range of *sacrifices* that members undertake to perform the praxes of Community Supported Agriculture.

Chapter 6: *Viability, Capacity and Sacrifice*

6.1

Introduction

In the preceding chapter I depicted the central tension between the *ethics* and *economics* of operating a CSA. I discussed the ethical principles of CSA and I detailed how the movement in general, and my case studies in particular, accommodated market values to the detriment of the founding ideals of Community Supported Agriculture, thereby compromising its transformative potential. Prior to this, in Chapter 4 I argued that social capital is a necessary and limited resource in respect of the success of Community Supported Agriculture. In this chapter I develop these arguments by considering the *viability* of my two CSA case studies:

(T)he logic of private enterprise is such that the CSA firm needs to be profitable or it will fold

Allen, 2010:296

CSA is all about getting people to commit to local food in the long term and connecting people with local food producers and to help ensure the viability of local food

Bob, Hazlehurst

Throughout the duration of my fieldwork I observed how each of my case studies struggled to attain economic viability and financial security. As a member of each executive body, and as Treasurer of COCA, I was acutely aware of the financial condition of my case studies and consequently I determined ‘viability’ as my final dominant theme and organising principle of this chapter. The executive bodies at Hazlehurst and COCA were both concerned whether the model of CSA would prove viable as a business plan. Despite the contrasting urban and rural settings, each of my case studies suffered from similar obstacles: how to internally manage the scheme; how to attract and retain members; and the difficulty of maintaining an efficient and stable group of volunteers to administer the schemes on a voluntary basis:

(I)s this whole idea viable, or is it just a bunch of well-meaning people, you know, pissing in the wind?

Helen, Hazlehurst

At Hazlehurst members of the Management Committee frequently raised concerns that the subscriptions were not raising sufficient funds to meet the costs of running the scheme as the following email from the Treasurer indicates:

Hi All

Please find attached accounts for January 2013. As you can see, even without the Grower costs (est at £1250 per month) Hazelhurst is unsustainable. I strongly recommend that all Vegbags are increased By £1 from March and the No of Vegbag customers increased to 40 asap

Regards

Gary

by email from the Hazlehurst Treasurer to the Management Committee,
31st January 2013

COCA also struggled financially as this member of the Core Group illustrates:

isnt this a time to tell the members the economic reality? ... their monthly fees **only** cover the cost of paying the growers and **none** is left over for buying in veg from outside when it gets expensive. We ask our members to trust in the csa and to carry on paying **KNOWING** that they will be getting local organic veg as soon as we can get it out of the field/polytunnel in a few weeks time. And we buy in when we can afford to, but not when to do so threatens the finances of the organisation

by email from Maddy to the COCA Core Group, 12th June 2013

Maddy claims that members should share the risk of production to ensure its financial stability: 'We ask our members to trust in the csa'. In particular she argues that the practice of buying in vegetables from external sources to satisfy members' expectations 'threatens the finances of the organisation'. In this chapter I discuss how each of my case studies sought to maintain economic viability whilst recruiting and satisfying their membership.

It has been argued that the model of CSA provides a niche marketing opportunity for small-scale farmers; producers who would otherwise be unable to compete in terms of cost and yield with industrialised agriculture are able to sell directly to their consumers (Andreatta et al., 2008; Stagl, 2002). The lack of intermediaries in the marketing of produce contributes to the viability of the scheme (Bougherara et al. 2009; Guthman et al., 2006) and farmers are able to predict their yearly income in advance (Galt, 2010). In North America many entrants to Community Supported Agriculture are young, educated, female and from non-farming backgrounds (Brown and Miller, 2008; Ostrom, 1997); Schnell refers to 'a new breed of farmer' including 'social workers, computer programmers, artists, and environmental psychologists' (2007:561). The CSA model allows new farmers to gradually develop their skills and create a market as CSA can be established without large amounts of capital for land, machinery or expensive chemical

inputs; Lizio and Lass argue that the single largest requirement of a successful CSA is *labour* (2005). However, according to Lamb, '(t)oo much of the legitimate work in supporting a CSA project is done through unsupported volunteerism' (1994:9):

I mean the problem with this is we're a small voluntary group and everybody knows that if, you know, if people don't do the jobs the thing falls apart and that's the end of it, really

Helen, Hazlehurst

In this chapter I argue that the viability of both my CSAs rested on volunteerism. I employ two key concepts to examine the viability of my case studies: *capacity* and *sacrifice*. Both of my CSA case studies suffered from a lack of *capacity*; the executive bodies faced challenges regarding their ability to administer the schemes effectively on account of a lack of volunteers with the appropriate skills and experience; and there were also difficulties concerning the cultivation of produce due to a lack of growing ability and insufficient support from members. I describe how, despite these obstacles and threats, both CSAs maintained their *viability* by depending on the voluntary assistance of members. However, I argue that my case studies depended on volunteering to an extent that I identify as a form of *sacrifice*. Consequently, although both CSAs remained functional, the *viability* of each scheme was always temporary, circumstantial, and ultimately fragile. Therefore, although each of my case studies remained resilient, their transformative potential was circumscribed by their weak and unpredictable viability.

I begin this chapter by discussing key economic concerns confronted by each CSA as they established themselves and began their operation. I focus on financial considerations that were common to Hazlehurst and COCA regarding expenditure, including wages; pricing strategies for veg-shares; and obtaining sources of funding. I then locate CSAs as *social enterprises* and I specifically argue that CSA can be positioned as a form of *diverse economy* that comprises a variety of market and non-market transactions that contribute to the *viability* of CSA. I describe the concept of a *gift economy* and argue that the *viability* of CSA also depends on members gifting their time and effort.

Firstly I consider the *organisational* capacity of those who participated in the administration of what were effectively two stand-alone, small start-up businesses, including the paid growers and multiplicity of different volunteers, such as myself in my role as a participant observer and member of the executive bodies¹¹⁷. I describe the multiple organisational tasks that were performed as gifted labour by volunteers and discuss how the management function of the

¹¹⁷ See Chapter 3 for a discussion of my volunteer role at both of my case studies

CSAs sometimes placed excessive and intolerable demands on individuals leading to fatigue and, in some circumstances, to what I describe as “burn-out”. I argue that the viability of my case studies relied disproportionately on a culture of volunteerism to manage the schemes. In the context of my case studies I define volunteering as the act of giving time, skills and labour to the CSA schemes.

Secondly I address challenges to the *growing* capacity of the CSAs due to a lack of horticultural competence allied to a shortfall in labour, including volunteer assistance from members. I claim that the viability of the schemes was threatened due to the lack of growing capacity because subscribers had pre-conceptions in respect of the quality and quantity of their weekly veg-shares. I describe strategies such as Work Days and hosting Wwoofers that Hazlehurst and COCA deployed to meet the deficit in growing capacity.

In the latter section of this chapter I use the concept of *sacrifice* to consider how CSA members at all levels accept accommodations and make contributions to the schemes. I claim that key participants such as executive body members and the growers at my case studies routinely sacrifice their time, money and labour for the benefit of the CSA. I also argue that the viability of CSA depends on subscribers making a variety of sacrifices such as accepting the range, quality and amount of vegetables they receive and giving of their time to assist with the reproduction of the scheme such as harvesting crops or distributing veg-shares. In this manner members internalise and conform to the values and praxis of CSA. I maintain that the transformative potential of Community Supported Agriculture depends on the collective *capacity* of those that participate and their willingness to *sacrifice* conventional consumer expectations.

6.2

Financial considerations

In order to contextualise my arguments concerning the viability of Community Supported Agriculture, I use this section to illustrate some key financial considerations regarding the initiation and operation of my case studies. Jarosz maintains that ‘(a) community economy does not have outlines and prescriptive norms, but *is always in the process of becoming* through material and social relations’ (2011:320, my italics). In Chapter 5 I described how each executive body navigated moral tensions as the CSAs sought to establish their identity and function. There were also many large, small and unfamiliar *business* decisions that had to be addressed in the nascent phase of each CSA.

CSAs rely on an aggregation of income streams to remain economically viable. The foremost, and most dependable, source of income is monthly subscriptions from members. However, as I

outline later in this chapter, subscription income fluctuated according to the number of new and departing members and, therefore, was difficult to predict accurately. During the course of my fieldwork both my case studies were of a similar scale, comprising 30-40 subscribers. The combined monthly income of the members supported a part-time grower (0.5-0.7 fte) at each CSA. As I mentioned in Chapter 4, sources of grant funding also played a significant role in CSA finances and Hazlehurst launched a community share offer to raise capital for the scheme. Finally, my case studies also received donations from philanthropic members; for instance, COCA received a gift of £1000.00 towards the cost of erecting a polytunnel.

In my *observer as participant* role (Dawson, 2010) as Treasurer of COCA I was well acquainted with the financial parameters of the CSA and was expected to deliver monthly updates at the regular Core Group meetings. The following excerpt exemplifies typical financial considerations at both of my case studies:

Finance update:

Ian and Pete¹¹⁸ gave a cash flow update, showing that we are dangerously close to not being able to pay Deri's¹¹⁹ wages. We just have enough money to cover COCA's core running costs, but anything else will tip the balance.

However, this assumes that there will be income from veg sales at the market and from the food co-op and from events. The No 2 account is essentially empty too¹²⁰.

Rent holiday still ongoing¹²¹.

Focus should therefore be re-doubled on gaining new members.

Julia found the Waterloo foundation as a possible funder. To follow up when the need arises.

minutes of COCA Core Group meeting, 23rd April 2013

The minutes of the meeting reveal how COCA struggled to raise sufficient income from veg-share subscriptions to pay their part-time grower, even though subscription income was supplemented by other sources such as the weekly market stall. Furthermore, at this juncture COCA benefitted from a suspension of rent payments on the land that was leased from their landlord farmer. The No. 2 account was reserved for grant funds which were designated for specific infrastructure projects or items of expenditure such as tools (*see figure 44*):

¹¹⁸ Membership Secretary

¹¹⁹ Grower at COCA

¹²⁰ This account was used to hold grant funds

¹²¹ Refers to the rent holiday on the land that COCA leased at Caerhys Farm

10. Please provide a full breakdown of what you will do with the money. Give clear costings with exact figures. Please note that you must include actual quotes for all items requested over the value of £500.

This grant cannot fund items that have already been purchased or will be purchased prior to receiving this grant

Item of expenditure	Cost of item (include VAT)	Amount requested from PIF
10 x swiss swivel hoes	£252.50	£252.50
5 x pruning knives	£54.85	£54.85
4 x junior wheelbarrows	£68.00	£68.00
Note – all of the below are on one quote		
5 x childs garden tool kit	£237.12	£237.12
10x fork	£213.25	£213.25
2x cultivator	£72.45	£72.45
10x rake	£225.58	£225.58
10x kids gloves	£22.42	£22.42

Figure 44: Excerpt from application to Pembrokeshire Impact Fund requesting funding for tools

The absence of funds in the No. 2 account was significant because, in extreme circumstances, as Treasurer I was obliged to draw on these funds to meet ‘core running costs’, such as Deri’s wages. These ‘ring-fenced’ monies were usually replenished using additional income such as the profits from the Harvest Party that I described in Chapter 4. My monthly update confirmed that the financial cushion afforded by temporarily transferring grant funds was not an economic option for the Core Group. In response, they recorded a need to expand the membership of the CSA and to consider sourcing additional grant funding to protect the scheme from cash-flow difficulties in the future. Unfortunately, these constrained circumstances were neither exceptional nor unusual during my tenure as Treasurer. I also presented the yearly accounts of the CSA to the wider membership at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) (see figure 45).

My forecast illustrates that COCA was expecting no new grant income in 2013, although the CSA had been a recipient of funding in former years. For example, later in this chapter I describe how COCA had previously applied for grant funding to initiate the Food Co-Op scheme; my annual forecast indicates that the Food Co-Op was anticipated to generate an income of £1000.00 in 2013. The expenditure side illustrates that the biggest single item of spending was labour for the part-time grower. However, volunteer Wwoofers, who I also discuss later in this chapter, created expenditure because COCA was obliged to provide food for the Wwoofers and they incurred electricity and gas costs in their static caravan accommodation.

COCA BUDGET FORECAST 2013	
INCOME	
Membership (46 members @ £24 per annum)	1104.00
<i>Veg shares</i>	
21 members @ £40	10080.00
22 members @ £20	5280.00
Food Co-Ops (x4)	1000.00
Market stall (weekly)	250.00
Raffles (x2)	200.00
Events (x2)	750.00
Donations	25.00
TOTAL	18689.00
EXPENDITURE	
Land rent (4 x acres @ £200 per acre minus discount)	700.00
Labour (20 hours per week @ £10 per hour)	10400.00
Wwoofers (2 x wwoofers: April-December)	1250.00
Veg buy-in	1500.00
Plants & seeds	1000.00
Hardware	500.00
Insurance	500.00
Diesel	400.00
Electricity	400.00
Gas	200.00
Administration	500.00
JCB (outstanding debt for groundworks)	400.00
TOTAL	17750.00
BALANCE	939.00

Figure 45: COCA Budget Forecast delivered in my role as Treasurer at COCA AGM, March 2013

According to Lizio and Lass, farmers are traditionally “price takers” accepting the price that the market is willing to pay for their produce (2005). Theoretically the model of Community Supported Agriculture allows the individual or group growing the vegetables to set a realistic price which reflects the true cost of labour and production, thereby empowering them as “price makers”. However, there is plentiful evidence from North America that CSA farmers usually set their share prices according to ‘what-the-market-will-bear’ (Lamb, 1994:9) and do not recompense themselves adequately, rendering themselves ‘chronically undervalued’ (Ostrom, 2007:107). Tegtmeier and Duffy (2005) found that over half of farmers in their survey of CSAs in the Midwest of North America did not pay themselves a fair wage and Galt et al. discovered that the majority of CSA farmers who they surveyed in California ‘take what’s left at the end of the year’, if anything (2011:23). Lizio and Lass state that ‘many farmers did not include the cost of their own labor as a cost factor. These farm operators evidently consider themselves *residual claimants*’ (2005:3, my italics). Later in this chapter I describe how the production of Community Supported Agriculture can be considered a form of *sacrifice*.

Brunori et al. claim that ‘(a)s sellers are not strangers to buyers... but rather are part of the same community, prices should reflect the willingness to take into account all the interests at stake, including the rights of farmers to a decent income’ (2011:47). As I discussed in Chapter 3, COCA was partly established to provide employment for one of the farmer’s sons: ‘Gareth

explained from Day 1 that he wanted the CSA to provide income for Deri' (p.54). COCA members supported this stance, even though some were in financial hardship themselves:

Q2.

Do you understand and agree with the philosophy of COCA and Community Supported Agriculture Agriculture Schemes (CSAs) in general?

I think it is good to support the local farmer especially now when financial situations have been difficult & I agree with supporting the farmer though finding myself struggling financially at present too.

response to COCA membership survey: August 2011

At Hazlehurst there was also support for social justice as I described in the debate about potential *governance* structures in Chapter 5. Consequently both my case studies attempted to provide a fair wage for their agricultural work-force although, as I relate later in this chapter, both growers worked significantly beyond their contracted hours. When I concluded my fieldwork the growers at Hazlehurst and COCA were paid £8.89 and £10.00 per hour respectively.

As I referred to earlier in this chapter, another large item of CSA expenditure was buying in additional vegetables to supplement members' veg-shares during the 'hungry gap'¹²²:

Business planning for next year:

- Approx breaking even: 52 weeks a year with 40 customers
- Need to have 40 customers to break even. Currently 35.
- Important to estimate buy-in. How much buy in should we have?
- Questionnaires from customers, will ask about buy-in.
- Hunger gap planning – 10 weeks?? Maybe? Making customers aware of buy-in plan.
- Buy-in plan needs to be decided by December 6th when Keith¹²³ emails standing orders for customers.

minutes of Hazlehurst Management Committee meeting, 6th November 2012

These minutes indicate that buying in of produce was a crucial component of the CSA balance sheet: 'Important to estimate buy-in'; 'Making customers aware'; 'plan needs to be decided'. Vegetables were bought in to supplement diminished veg-shares in the winter months. However, produce that was in short supply at my case studies was generally scarce, causing prices to be inflated as Maddy observes at the beginning of this chapter: '**none** is left over for

¹²² I explain the concept of the 'hungry gap' later in this chapter (p.234)

¹²³ Membership Secretary

buying in veg from outside when it gets expensive' (p.182). At Hazlehurst members' reactions to buying in additional vegetables varied. Following my argument in Chapter 5, some individuals adopted an *instrumental* approach to buying in vegetables:

I'd like to be able to ask for extra onions and pay more

response to Hazlehurst membership questionnaire: July 2013

In contrast, other members appreciated the *collaborative* ethics of sharing the risk of production and accepting seasonal variation in their veg-shares:

Community supported agriculture to me means getting those things that come FROM the community. I can 'BUY IN' my own vegetables but think a CSA needs to supply what I can't get, local, community grown veg

response to Hazlehurst membership questionnaire: July 2013

Lamb has suggested that:

(m)ore cooperation among CSA farmers needs to be developed in order that part of the risk can be shared at the production level. Otherwise, the consumers will of necessity have to rely on the market to replace shortages occurring on CSA farms

(1994:9)

COCA developed a barter relationship with a CSA in a neighbouring county that, unlike COCA, was able to grow carrots in abundance due to favourable soil conditions. By contrast, COCA produced a surplus of potatoes; therefore this exchange helped COCA to reduce the cost of bought in carrots. Hazlehurst shared a cultivation site with three other sets of growers who also established mutually beneficial trading links. Although Hazlehurst and COCA both decided to continue buying in produce from external sources, the expense, as a proportion of subscriptions fees, was closely monitored to prevent these additional vegetable purchases from threatening the financial integrity of the schemes.

The executive bodies at my case studies also had to reconcile a veg-share price that reflected the true cost of production but remained an attractive financial proposition to their members. Each CSA had to balance *collaborative* ideals with the *instrumental* need to ensure viability of the schemes. At Hazlehurst, in particular, there was also extensive and well-established competition:

People have no reason to stay with us 'cos they can go to Beanies, they can go to Regather¹²⁴, whatever, there are so many opportunities

Helen, Hazlehurst

As I argued in Chapter 5, CSA members were sensitive to the price of veg-shares: 'I suppose if I was doing it sort of financially, purely financially, I probably wouldn't go for a Hazlehurst bag' (p.167). In Chapter 3 I described my role on the Veg-Bag Marketing Sub-Group at Hazlehurst; one of the functions of the group was to determine the forthcoming price of veg-shares:

1. Pricing

Other CSAs tend to charge between £35 - £60 per month for their boxes. We also need to find out about prices of other box schemes and supermarket prices.

minutes of Veg-Box Marketing Sub-Group meeting, 13th March 2012

Research from North America suggests that CSA veg-shares are price competitive (Cooley and Lass, 1998; Farnsworth et al. 1996; Forbes and Harmon, 2007). Hazlehurst offered three sizes of veg-share: small (£8.00: 6 types of vegetables); standard (£11.00: 8 types of vegetables); and large (£13.00: 10 types of vegetables). Once veg-shares were being distributed, the Management Committee conducted a price comparison with a leading top-end supermarket and a well-known organic veg-box provider (*see figure 46*):

Hazlehurst Item and Weight	Waitrose			Riverford		
	Weight	Cost	Cost for same weight as Hazlehurst	Weight	Cost	Cost for same weight as Hazlehurst
300g Parsnips	500g	1.99	£1.20	1kg	2.55	0.77
300g Carrots	500g	0.89	£0.54	1kg	1.55	0.47
820g Potatoes	2.5kg	2.99	£0.98	1kg	1.45	1.19
200g Onions	750g	1.07	£0.28	500g	0.95	0.38
370g Leeks	1kg	4.99	£1.85	750g	2.75	1.35
140g Kale	180g	1.50	£1.16	350g	1.95	0.78
£8.00			£6.01			£4.94

Figure 46: Hazlehurst price comparison with small veg-share (£8.00) and supermarket and organic veg-box provider

¹²⁴ Two competing veg-box schemes operating in the same geographical area of south Yorkshire

Counter to findings from North America, the comparison illustrates that Hazlehurst's veg-share was more expensive. The discrepancy between the costs is likely, in part, to be accounted for by economies of scale achieved by these two large national operations. COCA offered a full-share (£15.00) and half share (£7.50). The Core Group at COCA also conducted a comparison that revealed their veg-shares to be more expensive than supermarket produce, although the comparison included non-organic produce due to lack of availability of organic produce in the supermarkets. During the course of my fieldwork both of my case studies raised the price of their veg-shares to more accurately reflect the cost of production:

Although extremely concerned that a price rise would deter customers, we agreed to charge:-

£8.50 – small box (50p rise – 6%)

£12.00 medium box (£1.00 rise – 9%)

£14.00 large box (£1.00 rise -7%).

Our message should refer to the increases being in line with organic veg price rises.

minutes of Hazlehurst Management Committee meeting, 14th January 2014

COCA raised the price of their veg-shares to £10.00 and £5.00 respectively. Some CSA members were unperturbed by the increase:

You see, for me paying ten pound a week for organic veg is a no-brainer. I do all my meals on ten pounds of organic veg

Miriam, COCA

I describe later in this chapter how other COCA members voluntarily chose to increase their subscriptions to reflect the actual costs of production. However, as I stated earlier, members could be sensitive to price prompting departures from the scheme:

I think the increase in price of the vegetables was the deciding factor in terms of overall costs outweighing benefits. A 33% increase is a big increase and the previous cost was just about where my threshold lay in terms of acceptability.

by email to COCA Membership Secretary, 7th February 2012

The final element of this discussion regarding financial considerations which affect the viability of Community Supported Agriculture concerns external funding. In Chapter 4 I described how Hazlehurst and COCA accessed grant funding by drawing on social capital within the executive bodies of the CSAs to access broader support networks through *linking* capital. Both of my case studies sought external funding to capitalise their businesses in the early phases of development and to supplement income from veg-shares. For example, earlier I referred to COCA's funding

application for tools and the CSA also received grants of £800.00 and £3127.00 from two separate funding bodies to erect a polytunnel. It was common at both case studies for a range of grant applications from local and national funders to be in progress:

- Peoples Postcode Lottery: perennial plants, tools, soil improvement (this part of the project would have to be completed within three months)
£1 872. **Deadline 9th April-25th May**
- South Yorkshire Community Foundation Small Grants Fund (initial proposal): publicity, email lists, marketing, website hosting, £1 500
Ongoing every three months
- Freshgate Trust: soil improvement, irrigation system, wheelbarrows, £901 **Deadline April 30th**
- Lush Charity Pot: rent, insurance, polytunnel heating £2080 **T.B.C.**
- Yorkshire and Clydsdale Bank: boxes, bags, cartons £340 **Deadline 16th April**
- Sheffield Town Trust: **veg storage facility ???**, propagation materials, netting/fleece/mesh, soil improvement, tools, **Training? ???** £500-£5 000
Deadline 16th April

excerpt from Hazlehurst Fundraiser report, 3rd April 2012

The above report illustrates the variety of grants that were available ranging from the UK-based Peoples Postcode Lottery to much more localised funding sources. Applications were often complex and lengthy demanding detailed financial information, and requiring considerable time and labour input from individuals such as the volunteer fundraiser at Hazlehurst. As I discuss later in this chapter, administrative tasks including funding applications exercised the collective and individual *capacity* of executive body members.

Grants were extremely competitive and both my case studies experienced frequent rejections from funding bodies. Furthermore, funding was usually restricted to infrastructure and materials such as the polytunnel at COCA or trees that Hazlehurst received funding for. It was more difficult to apply for funds to assist with *human* capital, although both my case studies were able to access grants for training purposes such as the mentoring for the grower at COCA that I describe later in this chapter. The lack of funding for human resources was important because, as I stated earlier, it comprised the single largest component of expenditure for each of the CSAs.

In addition there were many exceptions to eligibility; for example Hazlehurst was unable to access funding from Sheffield Town Trust because the growing site was beyond the city boundary in south Derbyshire (see *figure 33*, p.130). In Chapter 4 I described how Organic Centre Wales funded a study trip to Stroud Community Agriculture in England; paradoxically these funds were not available to Hazlehurst, although, conversely, Hazlehurst was able to apply for funding from the England-based Making Local Food Work programme. There was also a

temporal dimension to these sources of income; grants were often restricted to a certain time period until funds were exhausted, or applications were only permissible on an annual basis. Furthermore, success in one funding round did not guarantee an award in subsequent years. Therefore, in terms of the viability of Hazlehurst and COCA, grant funding was an opportunistic and unreliable of income.

Lizio and Lass maintain that ‘CSA farms seek to achieve goals other than or in addition to economic profitability. However, one basic requirement is that the CSA meet economic costs in order to remain viable’ (2005:10). In the preceding section I have described a range of these financial considerations including expenditure, price-setting, and grant funding that were common to both my case studies. I have used this discussion to foreground my arguments in the remainder of this chapter concerning *capacity* and *sacrifice* in relation to the *viability* of Hazlehurst and COCA, and the broader movement of Community Supported Agriculture.

6.3.1

Social Enterprise

In the previous chapter, drawing largely on literature from North America, I signalled a trajectory of development over the last thirty years whereby the exigencies of economics have, to some extent, displaced the founding ethical tenets of Community Supported Agriculture (Lang, 2010a). Increasingly there are also examples of farms in North America effectively operating veg-box schemes that are principally motivated by profit and give little credence to the community dimension of Community Supported Agriculture (Galt et al., 2011); critics have referred to these operations as ‘fake CSAs’ (Goodman, 2014). Consequently some manifestations of CSA take a predominantly *instrumental* approach¹²⁵.

However both of my case studies were initiated with specific *social* and *environmental* intentions:

Our aim is to grow and distribute organically grown, affordable food for the benefit of the community, using ecologically sustainable methods and to protect and enhance biodiversity

excerpt from Hazlehurst Newsletter No.9: June 2012

¹²⁵ See Chapter 5 for a description of the continuum of *instrumental/collaborative* CSA approaches (p.151)

The objects of the Company shall be to:

- Enable members to live well and eat well in an organic and sustainable way.
- Support sustainable food production in the local area.
- Grow a community around the project based on shared work, social activity and a spirit of friendship.

excerpt from the Memorandum and Articles of Association of COCA, June 2013

Hazlehurst and COCA are, therefore, both examples of *collaborative*-orientated CSAs that I align as social enterprises. Muñoz defines social enterprises as ‘organisations that use business practice in order to pursue a social or environmental goal’ (2010:3020) and Migliore et al. contend that ‘social entrepreneurship is oriented towards *value creation* through social benefit creation to satisfy both social and environmental needs’ (2014:896, my italics). Social enterprises represent the collective values of their founders; decisions are made by members or stakeholders rather than in the interests of capital; there is limited (or no) distribution of profits; and they promote long-term collaborative community capacity building (Defourny, 2001; Trivedi and Stokols, 2011). The dual characteristics of social enterprises: addressing social or environmental issues, and to function as a business, has been referred to as the ‘double bottom line’ (Emerson and Twersky, 1996, cited in Dart, 2004).

Each of my case studies demonstrated social and environmental goals reflecting their origins in the membership of Transition Heeley-Meersbrook and St Davids Eco-City Group¹²⁶:

(W)e’re obviously concerned about, very concerned [emphasises] about climate change and food security and all the Transition ideas

Alan, Hazlehurst

The two CSAs also conform to other accepted characteristics of social enterprises such as consensual decision-making by the membership. However, the underlying tension between ethics and economics, or *social* versus *enterprise* interests, was articulated by participants in the case studies:

(A)re we trying to fund ourselves specifically from the sale of produce or are we also looking at funding bids for doing good work for the world?

Karen, Hazlehurst

Karen, who produced a Business Plan for Hazlehurst, expresses the conflict between the CSA operating foremost as a self-sufficient business venture ‘from the sale of produce’

¹²⁶ See Chapter 3 for a description of the antecedents of my case studies (p.52)

(*instrumental*), or seeking to attract grants to pursue social and environmental (*collaborative*) outcomes. At both of my case studies it was necessary for the executive bodies to constantly negotiate this continuum of financial considerations versus the ethical aspiration of ‘doing good work for the world’. Cox et al. maintain that ‘CSA is seen to empower people by providing an arena in which they can act on their principles’ (2008:206). At Hazlehurst a participant observed that, for some of the leading individuals on the Management Committee, the CSA was a vehicle to express their beliefs:

(I)t’s a very concrete way of putting their ideals into practice and, but, kind of..., they do need to sell it to someone [laughs] in order to keep it functioning

Becky, Hazlehurst

Becky acknowledges the underlying ideology of CSA but qualifies her statement by asserting that the project must attract subscribers in order to remain solvent: ‘they do need to sell it to someone’. Her remark illustrates the tension between the (*collaborative*) ethics of the founders and the (*instrumental*) demands of retaining the financial viability of the scheme. By contrast, whilst acknowledging the core business of food production, the following participant at COCA emphasised the collective value of CSA:

(T)he social side of it is as important as the food we produce, I’m absolutely convinced of that, and that’s what CSA’s about

Maddy, COCA

COCA applied for various sources of funding for socially-orientated objectives including a grant to establish Food Co-Ops in several local primary schools. The scheme consisted of supplying a basic veg-share to school-children on a weekly basis during term-time; the financial administration was undertaken by the school-children whilst they learned about local food production (*see figure 47*). The grant funding paid for a Core Group member to work part-time on the scheme and any profits (minus the cost of purchasing supplementary vegetables) were reinvested in the CSA, according to the principles of social enterprise.

■■■■ visited Ysgol Bro Dewi in January to launch the

FOOD CO-OP

Children from the junior years will run the Co-op as an enterprise, which supports the National Curriculum.



The Co-op will supply local families and the wider community with a selection of vegetables on a weekly basis during term time. They will have the option to become members at any time.



ORGANIC

■■■■ has spent several sessions with the children where they have been learning about different topics, such as, local food, organic farming, food miles, community enterprise, sustainability, supermarkets and farmers. They have been very enthusiastic and designed some amazing promotional material for the Food Co-op



The children will be visiting the farm on a regular basis and will be involved in harvesting and growing as well forming their own vegetable patch at the school.



Figure 47: Excerpt from COCA Newsletter: February 2012

Reflecting the tensions that I discussed in the previous chapter, the Food Coop proposal aroused debate amongst the COCA Core Group because several members felt it detracted from the primary business of the CSA to serve its subscribers; it necessitated some of the grower's labour; and it required some of the harvest of crops to be diverted each week:

I didn't think it was the way we should've gone but I said "OK, if that's what you wanna do...."

Ben, COCA

However, proponents of the scheme on the Core Group argued that it raised the visibility of the CSA locally to a young audience who would take the veg-share home from school to their parents. These members believed that the Food Co-Op would enhance the viability of the CSA by attracting potential new members. Lizio and Lass observed that CSAs in North America which sold produce at farmers markets had higher profitability that they attribute to the increased marketing presence of the CSA. Ultimately, though, the Food Co-Op scheme foundered as initial enthusiasm and the numbers of members within the school dwindled over the course of the growing season.

In this section I have argued that my case studies can both be categorised as social enterprises on account of their stated social and environmental aims. However the degree and influence of

the *social* and *enterprise* constituents of the two CSAs were constantly being re-negotiated and conciliated as members of the executive bodies, including myself in both settings, defined the meaning and operation of these fledgling projects. The conflict between the *social* and *enterprise* aspects of the CSAs can be equated to the tension regarding *collaborative* and *instrumental* approaches to CSA that I described in Chapter 5. Whilst each case study scheme was intrinsically motivated by social and environmental objectives, they both recognised and were confronted by the necessity to be sufficiently enterprising in order for the CSAs to evolve into resilient and viable small businesses.

6.3.2

Diverse Economies

In the following section I position CSAs as a form of diverse economy. I argue that ‘performing the economy otherwise’ contributes to the transformative potential of Community Supported Agriculture (Leyshon and Lee, 2003:16). In 1996 the feminist economic geographers Julie Graham and Katherine Gibson wrote their seminal manifesto for diverse economies: *The End of Capitalism (as we knew it): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy*. Gibson-Graham argued that concepts such as the market, the global economy, and post-industrial society had become surrogates for ‘an unnamed capitalism (that) is implicitly invoked’ (1996:1). They maintained that the normative discourse of capitalism was so pervasive and compelling that it had been rendered virtually transparent, deriving its advantage from a perceived lack of alternatives. Gibson-Graham referred to this scenario as ‘capitalocentrism’.

However, Gibson-Graham argued that capitalism is much more partial and uneven in its reach and efficacy than it appears. Drawing on post-structural theory, Gibson-Graham advanced a new ‘politics of possibility’ (1996); they deconstructed familiar economic dualisms such as formal/informal; waged/unwaged; north/south; developed/undeveloped to ‘*queer*’ the economy by drawing out alternative readings of everyday economic practices. Gibson-Graham sought to highlight the multifarious paths through which economic surplus is created, appropriated and re-distributed beyond the capitalist sector. Leyshon and Lee maintain that these diverse economic spaces and practices are more focussed on social, ecological and ethical concerns than the accumulation of capital (2003).

Samers has critiqued Gibson-Graham’s celebration of small-scale informal production and consumption that he describes as ‘a myopic exuberance of both informal and diverse economies’ (2005:883). He contends that there is nothing inherently sustainable or socially just regarding the scale of enterprises and that it establishes a false and unhelpful dichotomy with capitalist production that is assumed to be contrapuntally ‘exploitative’ and ‘de-humanizing’

(ibid). Although Gibson-Graham emphasise progressive social ventures such as collectives and cooperatives, according to Williams most informal economic activity occupies a ‘dyspeptic’ middle ground borne out of financial necessity rather than choice that is ‘routine, unrewarding and repetitive’ (2005:215). Furthermore Hughes has stated that diverse economies are ‘more of an additional set of economic possibilities than broad-reaching resistance’ (2005:501).

However, I maintain that CSAs constitute a positive reading of diverse economies. Seyfang and Smith have described diverse economic projects such as CSAs as grassroots initiatives that ‘emphasise different social, ethical and cultural rules’ (2007:591). They contend that grassroots initiatives differ from mainstream commerce because they are based on social need and ideology. In the context of food growing schemes such as Community Supported Agriculture, Seyfang and Smith argue that they provide a sustainable good underpinned by an ideology of ‘reordered priorities and alternative values’ that furnish benefits beyond extracting economic rent (ibid:592). According to Seyfang and Smith, ‘grassroots innovations are a demonstration that *another way is possible*’ (ibid:594, my italics). They argue that diverse economic spaces, or niches, can signal new pathways to challenge existing regimes such as the pioneer organic food movement in the 1960s.

Gibson-Graham advocated the concept of diverse economies as an opportunity to reposition ourselves as positive economic subjects: ‘changing ourselves/changing our thinking/changing the world’ (2008:618). A key conceptual tool for Gibson-Graham is *reading for difference*, or ‘excavating the possible’ as the authors qualify it (ibid:623). Consistent with Gibson-Graham’s argument, McCarthy maintains that this ‘search for and recognition of alterity is a vital political act’ (2006:84). Fickey and Hanrahan state that the alterity of projects such as CSA are a means of ‘enacting radical politics of economies rooted in hope’ (2014:400). By choosing to join a CSA members consciously, or otherwise, participate in a diverse economy that enlists them as progressive economic agents.

Consequently Fieldhouse has argued that CSA is a means of reclaiming and re-embedding local economic relations at a human scale (1996). Hudson maintains that CSA allows members to ‘invest’ in one’s local community’ (2005:5) and Schnell asserts that as members it ‘provides for them a means of taking responsibility for the implications of their actions’ (2013:623). One of my case study growers explained:

More than anything you're [sighs] you're moving the distribution of money. Because by, like a CSA you're concentrating the economy locally, and you do things through supermarkets, it's only one, only a few persons benefit from that, and that's usually the shareholders in these big companies

Gareth, COCA

Gareth suggests that by supporting a CSA instead of a supermarket the economic benefits are diffused locally. Hudson argues that there is a multiplier effect for local economies if expenditure on food is retained amongst farmers rather than being dispersed along the conventional food chain of retailers, distributors, and wholesalers (2005:5). Holloway et al contend that the re-circulation of money in local economies 'provides employment opportunities, and creates a sense of community and mutual support' (2007b:12). This COCA member articulates that they appreciate how Community Supported Agriculture contributes to local economies:

Membership survey August 2011:

Q1

Why did you become a COCA member?

i) Other (please specify)

Because CSA is a model economic system that I believe in

response to COCA membership survey: August 2011

The following participant at Hazlehurst also felt it was important that subscribers appreciated the economic significance of their decision to subscribe to the CSA:

I think they're really [emphasises] necessary, the customers, and I think it is important for the customers to feel, it's, I know it's a very minor, people might think it's a minor end of it, but, how you spend your money, it's quite a big thing, really

Becky, Hazlehurst

CSAs seek to 'perform otherwise' the economy of Community Supported Agriculture by re-configuring the means of exchange. In North America it is common for CSAs to offer veg-shares on a sliding scale, according to the financial means of the individual member (Forbes and Harmon, 2008; Hudson, 2005). Lamb suggests that this is possible 'because of the dynamic of producers and consumers *cooperating* together and sharing perspectives of the economic process instead of trying to sell at the highest possible price, or buy at the lowest possible price' (1994:7, my italics). There are also many examples of CSAs donating surplus produce to food banks and soup kitchens to avoid wastage. In the context of my case studies, Hazlehurst

cultivated connections with a local food bank in order to perform its local food economy otherwise than an exchange commodity:

I have made links with a local foodbank on Gleadless Valley. Hazelhurst CSA is going to send any surplus vegetables we harvest to the foodbank for distribution. If you are a veg bag customer and you would like to donate your bag to the foodbank when you go on holiday, please give me a call and I can arrange for this to happen

excerpt from Hazlehurst Newsletter No. 15: June-July 2013

In California I observed a CSA that collected surplus fees from subscribers to subsidise veg-shares to school-children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Hinrichs and Kremer state that national church funds in North America allow subsidised veg-shares to be distributed to low-income families (2002). In the most radical examples of CSA, members and the farmer negotiate the level of the share fee at a public meeting at the beginning of the season (Henderson and Van En, 2007; Kittredge, 1996; Lamb, 1994)¹²⁷.

Many CSAs offer workshares whereby members pay a reduced subscription or receive a share of vegetables in exchange for their time and labour:

Volunteer wages through veg

All volunteers are entitled to the reduced rate membership fee and a share in the produce.

Any one who would like to volunteer but is not sure where Hazelhurst csa is contact me Bridie on 075***** to organise a lift.

Or for an escort to show the way, and walk with you to the field.

Kindest regards Bridie volunteer coordinator

by email to Hazlehurst members

(T)here are a few 'jobs' that might suit someone who has a regular few hours to spare and is interested in a workshare - a free veg share in return for owning and performing the task

excerpt from COCA Newsletter: Winter 2012/13

At COCA the Core Group also offered workshares to the grower and the farmer in recognition of their efforts. In the case of the grower this was in addition to his salary. At COCA the person

¹²⁷ 'The CSA at Temple-Wilton Community Farm went so far as to have members pledge whatever they could afford to the farm rather than allocate shares at a standard price. According to Trauger Groh, one of the founders of Temple-Wilton Farm (McFadden, nd): 'we realized that the members of our community had a wide range of needs and incomes and that one set price was not necessarily fair for every family', thus, clearly expressing CSA's communitarian leanings (Etzioni, 1997)' (Press and Arnould, 2011:187)

administering the Food Co-Op, including harvesting produce from the field for the project, also received a workshare. At both my case studies members who volunteered for growing and harvesting activities were offered a share of the crop. At Earthshare CSA in Scotland members can also exchange food for services via the local LETS¹²⁸ scheme and they can earn LETS by providing additional labour to the CSA (Cox et al. 2008; Holloway et al., 2007b). Workshares allowed each of my case studies to convert expenses in the form of a salary into a unit of exchange that was plentiful but was still valuable to the recipient. Arguably the vegetables that the volunteers received had additional value because, apart from being organic, they were exceedingly fresh, conspicuously local and the recipients enjoyed the satisfaction of having participated in their cultivation.



Figure 48: The Hazlehurst distribution garage – empty veg-bags awaiting filling on the right-hand side, freshly harvested rhubarb in the right foreground

Source: the author

By trading in vegetables instead of paying in currency for services both my CSA case studies were able to enhance their viability by not drawing on their limited cash reserves. Wilson maintains that the workshare blurs the distinction between producers and consumers and that it ‘opens membership up to a broader spectrum of individuals and provides a way to access what

¹²⁸ Local Exchange Trading Schemes (LETS)

might otherwise be unaffordable local organic produce' (2013:731). However, Wilson also observes that workshares are only practicable for those with sufficient time to participate, thereby potentially excluding those with responsibility for caring of others. Galt et al. describe strategies such as workshares, discounted veg-shares, and donating produce to food banks as 'non-capitalist forms of surplus value distribution' because they circulate 'surplus money, labour, product, capital, or any combination thereof', that enhances the viability of CSA (2016:494).

At Hazlehurst I volunteered at the garage location in Sheffield where the veg-bags were collated immediately after the harvest (*see figure 48*). This operation consisted of assembling approximately forty veg-bags according to their size – small, medium and large – and combining Hazlehurst produce with additional vegetables that were bought in. Generally two or three of us performed this task for a couple of hours before another volunteer picked up some of the bags and distributed them to collection points in her car¹²⁹ (*see figure 49*). I received a modest veg-share in recompense for my efforts consisting of produce that was in surplus from the field and some of the less desirable items of bought-in vegetables.

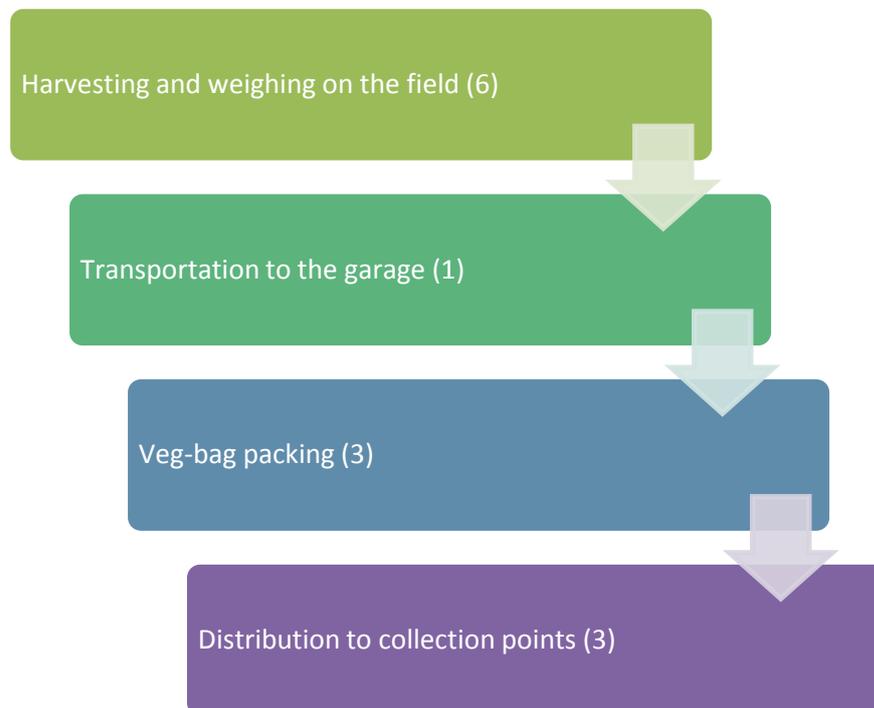


Figure 49: The Hazlehurst short supply chain including optimal numbers of volunteers at each stage

The informal exchange of vegetables – I never anticipated the volume, variety or range of quality that I received – thereby acted as a literal and metaphorical 'carrot' to encourage

¹²⁹ The garage was also a collection point for some neighbouring subscribers

volunteers to undertake an essential weekly task on behalf of Hazlehurst. At peak holiday periods during the summer that also coincided with the greatest levels of vegetable production as a Management Committee we endeavoured to closely monitor the number of available volunteers each week to ensure that this critical operation was performed satisfactorily. It was deemed crucial to the viability of the scheme that CSA members received their veg-shares regularly and punctually (*see figure 50*); if sufficient volunteers were unable to come forward a vital link in the chain of distribution would have been severed.



Figure 50: Hazlehurst veg-bags awaiting delivery to drop-off points in Sheffield
Source: the author

In this section I have outlined Gibson-Graham’s ‘politics of possibility’ in the form of diverse economies (1996). I described how, in the context of CSA a diverse, rather than commodity-based, economy is more capable of delivering viability for the individual schemes. I also explained some of the multiple ways CSAs seek to re-configure the economic relations of

commodity exchange. At my case studies these diverse economic forms of exchange broadened the range and extent of possible transactions and maximised the available assets of the CSA such as by using vegetables as a substitute currency. Therefore the intention of using workshares to attract volunteer labourers, or seeking to gain additional members by subsidising the Food Co-Op with labour and produce, was to preserve the overall viability of the CSA operation.

6.3.3

The Gift Economy

Frequently, though, members who volunteered at my case studies were also subscribers to the scheme. Consequently they had no need to gain additional vegetables and therefore *gifted* their labour without an expectation of direct material reward. The following interviewee at Hazlehurst and his partner were both key figures within the CSA yet grew vegetables extensively at home and at their allotment and, consequently, never accepted produce from the scheme:

We do kind of question why we are quite so involved, as to why we have been quite so involved, given how little we get out of it [laughs]

Alan, Hazlehurst

Drawing on the ethnographic work of Malinowski (1922) and Mauss (1925) who respectively observed the gifting rituals associated with the *kula* and the *potlatch*, Offer proposed the concept of a *gift economy* (1997). In Malinowski's celebrated ethnography: '*Argonauts of the Western Pacific*', he described ritual gifting that consisted of long-distance oceanic trade in decorative sea shells across the region of Melanesia (1922). The geographically isolated islanders were only aware of exchange with their immediate neighbours and therefore did not appreciate the full extent of the trading system. However Malinowski identified the ritual of *kula* as a precursor to global commodity exchange based on currency and price.

Mauss subsequently compared the ritual of *kula* to *potlatch*, another form of gifting and exchange conducted amongst the Native Americans tribes in the Pacific Northwest (1925). *Potlatch* comprised an elaborate ritual of conspicuous generosity and display of wealth such as the provision of sumptuous feasts for neighbouring communities. Mauss argued that, in addition to facilitating trade, *potlatch* was a means of establishing and reinforcing aristocratic social order, amongst and between tribes: 'the circulation of wealth (is) *but one part* of a wide and enduring contract' (ibid:3, my italics). He elaborated Malinowski's findings by distinguishing between the gift and economic features of trade between tribes. According to Mauss, gifts are '(i)n theory voluntary, disinterested and spontaneous, but are in fact *obligatory* and *interested*'

(ibid:1, my italics); he argued that the reciprocation of gifts was often delayed, repaid in a different form, and carried a sanction if the obligation was overlooked or ignored.

Following Malinowski and Mauss, Offer maintained that, despite the global expansion of capitalist market exchange, much trade is still conducted face-to-face based on social relations of reciprocity (1997). Offer states that, apart from the transfer of goods, participants in the gift economy additionally benefit from the satisfaction of *regard* between individuals. Offer suggests that *regard* consists, in part, of acknowledgement, attention, acceptance, respect, intimacy, love, friendship, kinship, and sociability, qualities that are otherwise absent in market transactions based solely on price signals (ibid). However, Psarikidou and Szerszynski argue that '(e)ven in retail spaces, customers typically get involved in a diversity of relations and practices that go beyond the narrow understanding of the economic' (2012a:36).

Warren, who studied volunteer behaviour at Yorkshire Sculpture Park in northern England, describes the act of gifting time and labour as 'emotional and embodied acts of philanthropy' (2014:2). Therefore the gift economy consists of an *emotional* as well as a *financial* bond (Offer, 1997). Myers asserts that the gift economy is 'a world beyond market logics; a mode of distribution rooted in social reproduction that decommodifies production, distribution, and consumption' (2013:409). Consequently Alan at Hazlehurst has no expectation of an exchange such as the receipt of vegetables in recognition of his work. Instead he derives satisfaction, or *regard*, through participating in the CSA project that he believes in. Furthermore, by gifting his resources of time and labour, Alan is contributory in the reproduction of the CSA scheme. Goodman has described these affiliations as 'the strands of personal interaction, reciprocity and moral authority *that produce value and cultural meaning*' for members of alternative food networks (2003:3, my italics). There were other instances at Hazlehurst of individuals selflessly gifting their services:

Carol, who lives down the road, she goes out many Thursdays and harvests¹³⁰, she doesn't have any veg from it

Becky, Hazlehurst

Becky describes a fellow 'Green Triangle'¹³¹ resident called Carol who wasn't a member of the CSA but who frequently volunteered to harvest produce at the Hazlehurst growing site on the edge of Sheffield. Carol also gifted significant administrative tasks to the CSA but never accepted payment, in vegetables or otherwise although, in Offer's terminology, she received the regard of the Management Committee and other members.

¹³⁰ See figure 46

¹³¹ See Chapter 4 for a fuller explanation of the the Green Triangle (p.122)

financial evaluations' (2003:47). Psarikidou and Szerszynski also observed elements of the gift economy in their study of transactions within Manchester's ethical foodscape (2012a); trading between multiple food enterprises in the city comprised 'high levels of social cooperation, solidarity, and trust' including the gifting of goods and labour (ibid:36). Crouch and Ward state that the gift economy is also prevalent at allotments citing examples of seed-sharing, and exchanging or donating excess plants (1997).

According to Offer, the act of gifting 'establishes (a) repetitive, self-enforcing bond, which facilitates trade' (1997:457). However, he also maintains that gifting carries a 'contractual obligation' between individuals; it establishes bonds of trade but inherently it confers an expectation of reciprocity between individuals. Offer refers to this characteristic obligation of the gift economy as a *debt*. Whilst individuals may ostensibly give of themselves freely, Offer argues that there is an implicit expectation that the recipients will ultimately respond with a corresponding gift:

Gareth's putting so much in, that's what makes a lot of other people put a lot of time in for nothing

Maddy, COCA

Maddy implies that the farmer at COCA was so generous in his gifting that it invoked other members of the scheme to give their own time and labour to an extent that they might not have otherwise. Therefore, in the context of the personalised face-to-face economic relations of COCA, these members felt compelled to reciprocate Gareth's gift and thereby served the social and economic reproduction of the CSA. Sage contends that 'a sense of "entanglement" arises from the hybridity of moral and money economies that impose certain obligations and responsibilities on both transacting parties' (2003:49). Offer referred to this compulsion element of the gift economy as a market 'bad' as opposed to a market 'good' (ibid). In the latter section of this chapter I discuss how the extent of personal gifting by CSA members on behalf of my case studies can be regarded as a form of *sacrifice* that is often accompanied by an expectation of reciprocity.

In this section I have discussed the concept of the *gift economy* and argued that central figures in my case studies were often motivated to volunteer by the satisfaction of *regard* rather than an expectation of material reward. I argued that through the act of gifting individuals reproduced the social and economic structures of the CSAs significantly contributing to their viability. However I also asserted that the conferment of gifts is accompanied by a corresponding expectation of obligation and mutual reciprocity that falls upon other members of the CSA.

Given the clear reliance of CSAs on gifted labour for their viability, in the following section I discuss my case studies in terms of the *capacity* of the individuals that comprised the CSAs, including my own. I examine the capacity of participants that comprised the executive bodies; the growers at the sites of cultivation; and the numerous additional volunteers that performed diverse tasks such as weeding, harvesting and the distribution of CSA produce. According to Henderson and Van En, '(t)he determined work of a relatively small group of people keeps each CSA afloat' (2007:162). However, at each of my case studies there was a deficiency in the number of volunteers who were required to make the CSAs function adequately:

(T)here was a risk of it falling apart for lack of people to do the work

Helen, Hazlehurst

I was just getting really, really, really tired. I've got quite a capacity for keeping going but I was just getting very tired and just had no spare capacity to do my job, really

Alan, Hazlehurst

In the following sections I focus on the related aspects of *organisational* and *growing capacity* that affected the viability and resilience of my case studies.

6.4.1

Organisational capacity

For much of the time at each of my case studies the grower was the only paid member of staff. Therefore the duties of administration of the schemes fell to the volunteer executive bodies, of which I was a member at both case studies. This was perceived to be a considerable responsibility:

(I)t is a business and it's handling thousands of pounds which is really scary for those people

Maddy, COCA

Each executive body at my case studies usually consisted of approximately seven or eight members. However, in the embryonic stages the workload at each CSA often exceeded the combined personal capacity of those who participated. There were many instances during my observational fieldwork when key members expressed concern about the demands that participation in the CSA was placing on them:

I find it, err, I find it a bit over-whelming at times [pauses]

Ben, COCA

I don't want something that takes over so much of my life

Helen, Hazlehurst

The following email was sent to COCA members prior to an AGM in an attempt to meet the shortfall in capacity on the Core Group. The communication is indicative of the scope and quantity of tasks that were undertaken by the volunteer members of the Core Group and other close associates:

There are a number of key roles that do need attendance at the monthly core group meetings. However, there are even more jobs where you really don't need to leave your house, let alone attend regular meetings!

So, if anything from the list below takes your fancy please just hit reply to this email and let us know:

- collecting tasty veg recipes
- managing the membership list (spreadsheet)
- website management (Wordpress)
- writing blog posts
- writing newsletters
- researching/purchasing things we need (web and phone research)
- keeping track of grant funds (spreadsheet/reports)
- sourcing and buying in veg during hungry gap
- taking minutes of meetings
- writing funding bids
- weighing and boxing in the share shed on Saturday morning (possible new workshare for someone)
- transporting shares to remote hubs (potential future workshare)
- helping with one of the school co-ops (see article below)
- any other skill you can offer!

excerpt from COCA Newsletter: Winter 2012/13

In addition to the roles outlined above there were two other key positions at COCA: Chair and Treasurer. The Chair was responsible for chairing meetings and taking an overview of the scheme; I became the second Treasurer of COCA during the course of my fieldwork¹³². In their study of Australian CSAs, Lea et al. claim that tasks such as book-keeping and maintaining membership databases constitute an obstacle to farmers who may not possess the particular

¹³² See Chapter 3 for a detailed description of my immersion in my case study CSAs

administrative skills or additional time required to perform them (2006). At COCA one of the key participants asserted that the success of the CSA scheme depended on the skills and time contributed by individuals such as myself on the Core Group:

If Gareth didn't have everyone supporting him it wouldn't be, it wouldn't have made it as a farmer-led CSA because Gareth's wouldn't have had the skills to, and the time because he's so busy to do all the organisation and that's not his forte

Ben, COCA

From the departing COCA Treasurer I inherited a hand-written ledger of transactions that had usually been conducted by telephone or in person at a local bank. Although the accounts were legitimate and proper, in their existing form they were cumbersome to access and didn't permit any easy form of analysis that was required to quantify income and forecast expenditure. I immediately introduced electronic spreadsheets and transferred all financial transactions to online banking; these constructive improvements allowed me to share and monitor all of COCA's monetary incomings and outgoings electronically with the Membership Secretary. Seyfang and Smith argue that grassroots initiatives often lack 'formally documented institutional learning' because it is 'tacitly held within *people*' (2007:596, my italics). However, as a consequence of being conversant with the relevant software and technology, I was able to raise the organisational capacity and functionality of COCA in a form that was readily transferable to my peers and successors.

The systematization of COCA's accounts contributed to the financial operation and viability of the scheme; in particular it provided the Core Group with information to project the cash-flow of the CSA over the entire year's growing season. This knowledge was important because the Core Group frequently had to defer expenditure on non-essential items such as tools that were requested by the grower when there weren't sufficient funds in the account. However the activity of creating spreadsheets and dealing with the numerous payment transactions that were necessary whilst I held the position occupied many hours of my study and leisure time; it would not have been possible to dedicate myself to this extent if I hadn't had the capacity to volunteer as an *observer as participant* (Dawson, 2010). Once I decided to withdraw from my COCA case study it took several months of canvassing members of the local community through informal networks to find another person with the appropriate skills and sufficient time to take over the role of Treasurer:

COCA is looking for a new treasurer

Posted on [28 October 2013](#) b

Ian Humphrey, our long-standing treasurer has now moved away and will soon be stepping down.

We are looking for someone to take on the role in a voluntary capacity. Ian has done a great job putting our systems in place and he can help familiarise you with these.

If you are interested, or know of someone who might be, contact chair@coca-csa.org or tel 07 XXXXXXXXXX

Many thanks,

The core group.

posted by the Membership Secretary on COCA blog

Source: <http://www.coca-csa.org/blog>

Several months after this blog was posted my replacement was appointed and finally, after two year's tenure, I handed over the entire administration of COCA's accounts during a short transition period.

In the evolutionary phases of the case studies a lot of effort was required to develop the CSAs; each executive body suffered from a lack of capacity in terms of volunteers. At Hazlehurst both of these key participants expressed doubts that the Management Committee had sufficient capacity to respond to the assorted and disparate demands of instituting the veg-bag scheme:

So we were doing nine jobs between us. I was doing most of them 'cos Keith was ill for about two months. When we'd broken it down into all the different roles that's how many we were doing

Alan, Hazlehurst

I've only got so much capacity....

Helen, Hazlehurst

Each of these Management Committee members suggests that the workload was excessive, even though the committee at that stage comprised eight members. There was also concern that the scheme required a degree of complexity that exceeded the organisational capacity of the participants:

It's bureaucratically and financially and administratively, it's difficult, there's lots to be done, there's responsibilities to be taken

Gerry, Hazlehurst

It was quite complex, and, because we'd taken on this enormous task and people coming in who hadn't worked together before, um, in retrospect we might have been trying to run before we could walk

Sasha, Hazlehurst

Both of my case studies were new ventures being led by small groups of volunteers who had little or no relevant experience of running a small business. The grower at Hazlehurst expressed his concern that the Management Committee weren't equipped to run the CSA in comparison to a farmer on an existing farm:

[If] the CSA's grown out of the farm, which is what the most successful CSAs have been, then I think you're acutely aware of the, kind of, business side of things in a way that you don't get in something which has come out of the Transition Network, maybe, which is lots of different people. It's good in that way in that you get lots of people involved, but it's not necessarily doesn't have that kind of focus that, err, you know, a working farm has which is always a farmer and making it work financially

Bob, Hazlehurst

Neither CSA had established systems of control for dealing with the range of responsibilities and transactions that were required such as maintaining membership databases; making funding bids; and producing effective marketing material:

We didn't realise how big it was, but we were sort of forming the structures for how to do this stuff, we're learning as we were going

Richard, Hazlehurst

At the outset, neither of my two case studies had any precedent to emulate or immediate experience of Community Supported Agriculture to draw on:

I think it's very difficult because we're starting from scratch. It's a learning curve, none of us have ever done this before

Annie, COCA

(I)t really is about feeling your way and seeing what will work. I mean, that's been our experience, anyway. We haven't been right through a whole year yet so we don't really know what's gonna happen

Keith, Hazlehurst

During my participation my case studies were both in a novice phase and I shared the experience of learning how to 'do CSA' with my companions. Each executive body received specialist guidance from practitioners in the field of Community Supported Agriculture and professional advice on incorporating as cooperative businesses. My case studies also received specific advice on devising business plans and received tuition in horticultural skills from experienced vegetable growers.

During an interview with one of the key members of Hazlehurst I reflected on the relative ignorance of those, like myself, who served on the Management Committee during its first year of commercial operation:

Ian:

It's hard to imagine many other settings where a group of people would try and run something

Keith:

[laughs]

Ian:

which they're so

Keith:

[laughs] It's total madness [giggles]

Ian:

[laughs]

Keith:

It's quite nice because it is so un..., is quite mad and it's such a bonkers thing to do, really

However Hinchliffe et al. perceive 'what formerly might be held to be nonexpertise as a *resource* for possible innovation' (2007:261, my italics). In their study of a Pakistani and Bangladeshi women's gardening initiative in inner-city Birmingham, they suggest that expertise should be theorised as 'learning to gather together in innovative ways' (ibid). At Hazlehurst Keith also expressed confidence that the Management Committee were learning collectively to achieve their ambition of running the CSA successfully:

It is a very strange thing, I never believed it would work, erm, and now I'm just beginning to think it might

Keith, Hazlehurst

However the following participant at the same CSA depicted the challenges of undertaking the project with insufficient knowledge or experience:

We really didn't know what was going on, we hadn't, it was very hard without having been through a year already, it's kind of a fire-fighting situation at times, isn't it, at times, so it's really an unnerving position to be in if you've got, trying to fit it in around other things

Alan, Hazlehurst

Alan describes the difficulties of participating in a project during its first year of operation; his imagery of 'fire-fighting' reflects the pressure that members of the Management Committee experienced during that formative period of the CSA. Inevitably in these circumstances members of the committee experienced fatigue:

I think that others, like me, may be feeling a bit exhausted by Hazlehurst stuff by email from Helen to the Hazlehurst Management Committee

However, during an interview the same participant vividly illustrates her loyalty to the scheme:

We all feel this is precarious, we've got, we can't let go which is why I say, my plan is to do for a year and I think, I think I make my contribution and I go but I, you know, when it comes to the push I shall be very [pause] worried, are there going to be enough people to carry it on? But the risk is we burn ourselves out

Helen, Hazlehurst

Helen maintains that 'we can't let go' and that 'I shall be very worried'. In Offer's language of gifting (1997), this participant has established a strong emotional bond to the project for which she now feels partially responsible. Another key participant at Hazlehurst also voiced his desire to retreat from the intensity of the scheme but demonstrates his attachment and obligation to it:

Yeah, well, in a way, I, kind of, wanted to get it to a stage where I felt like I could leave without feeling like I was leaving people in the sh*t, so I'm still, I'm going to carry on my involvement but just not quite so intensely

Alan, Hazlehurst

Alan would like to withdraw from some of his responsibilities to the scheme but he doesn't want to leave the remaining members of the Management Committee at Hazlehurst: 'in the

sh*t'. Despite the considerable personal sacrifices that he has made on behalf of the CSA, he experiences an enduring obligation to the scheme and its members. However, in extreme circumstances members of the Management Committee sometimes felt compelled to resign without notice:

Dear Charlotte

I'm sorry to let you know that John and I have reached the difficult decision to withdraw from the CSA with immediate effect. We have both found ourselves with increased work and other commitments and feel that we can no longer continue to be part of the committee or as volunteers. We've found that the committee roles require more time and input than we expected and feel that we are unable to sufficiently keep on top of things. This is affecting us personally, and we don't feel that we are able to give the roles the time and commitment that they need and deserve (which is only going to increase with the start of the veg box scheme). Unfortunately our enthusiasm for the project has been replaced by feeling overwhelmingly stressed about it, so for our own sanity and the sake of the CSA, we feel this is the best choice.

Apologies for the short notice, this has been a really hard decision to make. We're going to be out of email contact for a few days but will send you all information that we need to pass over as soon as possible. There are a couple of urgent invoices that Bob has sent me which I'll ask Angie to pay.

We wish you and the CSA all the best for the future and truly hope that it is a success.

Kind regards

Laura and John

by email to the Hazlehurst Management Committee

In the context of Fair Trade, Barnett et al. have referred to the 'working up of 'moral selves'' (2005:13). According to the argument that I proposed in the previous chapter, Laura and John identify themselves with the (*collaborative*) ethical dimensions of the scheme and, following Lund et al. (2013), can be regarded as "the convinced". However they can no longer 'give the roles the time and commitment that they need and deserve'; their resignation is for 'the sake of the CSA'. Laura and John articulate their connection and obligation to the scheme: 'this has been a really hard decision to make', yet they have jointly amplified their commitment to Hazlehurst to the extent that they resign to protect themselves as a couple.

Laura and John both held important roles; however they felt the scheme was having a negative effect on their relationship and work lives and left the Management Committee unexpectedly and at short notice. Lamb (1997) and DeLind (1999) both refer to the syndrome of volunteers departing CSA schemes under duress as “burned-out”. The abrupt withdrawal of this ‘overwhelmingly stressed’ couple compromised the capacity of the Management Committee at a vital juncture in the evolution of the CSA as the veg-bag scheme was shortly to be launched. It precipitated a re-evaluation of the tasks and responsibilities of the Management Committee who subsequently sought professional assistance from a local NGO called Voluntary Action Sheffield (VAS) to define the roles that could reasonably be conducted by individual volunteers:

For those who weren't there, 6 of us spent a couple of hours at Voluntary Action Sheffield this week doing a role profiling exercise. This was with a view to advertising for more people to help with the management tasks of the CSA, as well as to look at the structure we have at present for running the organisation and to consider if it needs any change.

I found it a really enlightening and helpful process and it certainly explained why we sometimes feel overwhelmed with the amount of work there is to do by email from Helen to the Hazlehurst Management Committee, 9th June 2012

The review of roles that was undertaken by VAS with key members of the Management Committee resulted in a restructuring of the executive body leading to more realistic and pragmatic expectations of its voluntary members. Ultimately, therefore, VAS was instrumental in raising the resilience and capacity of Hazlehurst during its crucial first year of veg-bag distribution. In Chapter 4 I discussed how VAS also assisted Hazlehurst by using its website to attract volunteers to the CSA, either to help at the growing site, or as potential members of the Management Committee when a particular skill-set such as experience of marketing was required. In the same chapter I also related how the Soil Association helped to initiate the CSA by providing *professional advice*, thereby extending the capacity of the Steering Group to launch the scheme¹³³. These examples illustrate how *linking* social capital to NGOs such as VAS and the Soil Association expanded the collective *capacity* of my case studies enhancing the viability of the CSAs.

¹³³ In Chapter 5 I also discuss of the role of Co-operatives UK in assisting Hazlehurst with its governance structure (p.156)

6.4.2

Growing capacity

I have discussed how a lack of capacity amongst the executive bodies of my case studies had an impact on the organisational functioning of the CSAs. However there were also difficulties relating to the capacity of the grower to cultivate produce in each setting. At COCA the challenges arose due to a combination of the low skills-base of the grower and the unreliable support he received from volunteers. CSA places a particular set of demands on growers because it requires that they maintain as wide a variety of crops over as long a period of the season as is possible in order to make the scheme attractive to subscribers and therefore remain commercially viable (Cone and Myhre, 2000). Galt et al. in their study of Californian CSAs reported high levels of self-taught growers ‘learning-while-doing through “trial and error”’ (2011:11).

At COCA the grower appointed by the Core Team was the son of the farmer:

Gareth explained from Day One that he wanted the CSA to provide income for Deri for one of his sons, and Deri really, and we all supported that because it was the start, so we've always been right behind that, umm, that idea even though Deri, you know, hasn't got growing, growing experience or qualifications but, you know, there's different ways of learning and he's, Deri has been learning as he goes along, hasn't he?

Ben, COCA

Deri had an agricultural background but no direct experience of growing vegetables other than organic potatoes. Consequently the Core Team ensured that he received regular mentoring sessions to improve his horticultural skills. However one of his mentors expressed their reservations about the capacity of Deri as a novice grower to cope with the heightened demands of multi-cropping vegetables:

Deri is really new to it, he doesn't really know what's going on and it's like, he just feels overwhelmed by it

Ed, COCA

In the following passage this COCA Core Group member articulates the ramifications of employing an inexperienced grower on the viability of the project:

On the one hand that's been our challenge, to get the membership up, or an income stream up enough to be able to employ somebody but the other side of that is who are we employing?... Deri is really keen but clearly, obviously he's a new, he's gotta get the skills, so we've got the added challenge. We've got the two big challenges of funding the damn thing anyway, but also somehow getting Deri to a level in which he can produce the goods and the two are so inter-related, because unless we're producing the goods, we're not going to get the members and we're going to lose members. We have [emphasises] begun to lose members...

Pete, COCA

Pete argues that the prosperity of the CSA depends on a dependable source of appealing produce and is concerned that the scheme may be jeopardised by vegetables of inferior quality: 'unless we're producing the goods, we're not going to get the members'. Pete believed that membership losses could be attributed to shortcomings in the quality and quantity of the veg-shares. Furthermore, each time a member resigned, COCA lost a subscription payment thereby impairing the ability of the Core Group to pay the grower's salary. However, the capacity of the grower to produce sufficient vegetables of a suitable quality was essential to retaining membership. COCA attempted to mitigate the effect of members' resignations on the CSA's cash-flow by asking for three months' notice but this was not always honoured by departing members:

The reason for us leaving coca is that we have found the quality of the veg. to be quite poor even though we always arrive at the very beginning of the start time. As a result we have ended up throwing away a lot of it and sometimes not even bothering to take it in the first place.

Jenni and I eat a lot of veg and this has proved expensive for us as we have had to go and buy extra to make up for the deficiencies in the coca veg. If we had decided to leave for any other reason we would of course agree to carry on for another three months but in this case I hope you will understand our reluctance to do so.

We think the coca idea is a great one but feel it needs some fine tuning especially in the area of quality control.

All the very best to you and we wish you success in the venture

Mike

by email to the COCA Membership Secretary

Mike and Jenni have transgressed the financial and moral code of COCA by not accepting their obligation to observe the notice period: 'we think the coca idea is a great one' but their sentiment does not translate into a commitment to support the scheme, even for the remaining

three months of their notice period. The loss of three month's subscription from these members had an adverse effect on the predicted cash-flow of the CSA and a negative impact on the viability of the scheme. In my role as Treasurer of COCA I was acutely aware of the delicate balance of income and expenditure; as I described earlier, each month I presented a spreadsheet to the regular meeting of the Core Group detailing the financial liabilities of the CSA and its predicted income, including the impact of leavers from the scheme such as Mike and Jenni.

During my research the grower at COCA was only employed for half of the week as the income from the members could not support a full-time salary. However Community Supported Agriculture is a labour-intensive form of agriculture; for example, the substitution of pesticides requires frequent and extensive weeding to prevent crops from being choked by competitor species in the field. Therefore there were also issues related to the level of assistance that Deri received on the field:

(T)he amount of volunteer effort from the local community has declined. The first year it was very high, um, and people have gradually pulled out

Maddy, COCA

At both of my case studies there was no compulsion on members to volunteer:

(W)ith COCA we started off saying we wanted people to have at least two hours a month involvement on the farm and we wanted to specify that but it put people off, we found. The feedback we got was "I don't want to be made to do something", umm, so we did, we took it out

Ben, COCA

At the moment, the way that we're running there's not that expectation that because you're a subscriber or member that you're expected to participate

I think something slightly fell apart when we said people don't have be members to get a veg-box because that seems risky to me

Helen, Hazlehurst



Figure 52: Volunteers preparing seed trays at Hazlehurst

Source: the author

Helen expresses the risk that subscribers may feel less attached to the scheme as non-members and therefore be less inclined to provide assistance. At COCA each person who received a veg-share was compelled to be a member but at Hazlehurst it was possible to subscribe to the veg-bag without taking out membership of the scheme:

I thought we'd decided at a previous MC¹³⁴ Meeting that a condition of subscribing to the veg-bag in 2013 would be to take out membership.

Ian

We are a bit precarious numbers-wise so haven't insisted on membership for customers. Keith has asked customers if they'd like to join but not one has to my knowledge. I think we need to have a decent waiting list before we can insist on it as we can't afford to lose any customers but that is not my decision to make

Alan

by email from the Chair of the Management Committee, 18th December 2012

¹³⁴ Management Committee

Alan argues that Hazlehurst cannot afford to insist on membership as a condition of receiving a veg-share because it could jeopardise the number of people prepared to subscribe. Therefore the *instrumental* values of financial viability were given priority over *collaborative* principles of necessitating membership: 'I think something slightly fell apart' (p.219). DeLind relates her own experience of this dilemma at a CSA she helped to establish in North America: '(d)espite our non-profit status and guiding philosophy... we set ourselves up to chase the dollar' (1999:5). It was also perceived by the executive bodies of both CSAs that members should not be obliged to volunteer their time and labour, in addition to paying their subscription (*see figure 52*).

Although the viability of the schemes relied on members volunteering, both executive bodies believed that compelling subscribers to participate would deter membership and, therefore, affect the level of income:

Q10

Which days of the week can you volunteer? Please indicate morning, afternoon or all day.

My understanding of a CSA was that helping out was entirely voluntary, if and when you had the time or the inclination. I relise more members/income are needed but to imply that it is a requisite of the scheme is offputting to me.

response to COCA membership survey: August 2011

In response to low enthusiasm and a diminishing level of volunteer labour at COCA, the Core Group introduced a monthly Work Day on Saturdays:

www.coca-csa.org/so-much-more-to-do/

← Scarecrow Making Morning Saturday 6th July – Weedathon! →

So much more to do!

Posted on 14 May 2013 by David Livingstone



There is still an awful lot to do if we're to get the growing season off to a good start. [redacted] still has a huge number of carefully nurtured seedlings to plant out in the field and only one pair of hands to do it!

Being a member of COCA carries no obligation to help out with veg growing, but if you have an odd half-hour, then there has never been a better time to put it to use at the farm.

The next three Saturdays **18th May, 25th May and 1st June** are all opportunities to help plant those seedlings. Turn up anytime **from 10:00 until 12:00** and do bring the children. Either [redacted] will be on hand to show you what needs doing.

Hope to see you there.

posted by the Membership Secretary on the COCA Blog
Source: <http://www.coca-csa.org/blog>

The sociality of the day was encouraged with a shared lunch; during the summer months a pizza oven was lit and additional activities such as scarecrow making were devised to broaden the appeal of the event to CSA members with young children. By making the arrangements for volunteering more regular and transparent it was hoped to encourage additional members to assist. Although the Core Group professed the voluntary nature of the Work Days: ‘Being a member of COCA carries no obligation to help out with veg growing’, the viability of the scheme depended on periodic substantial inputs of labour to achieve key tasks such as transplanting multiple seedlings or picking extensive areas of potatoes. Work Days were also used to accomplish significant one-off tasks such as covering a polytunnel with polythene or creating a new soft fruit area. Therefore, following Mauss, in the act of gifting their own time at the weekend, the Core Group had an expectation that other members would also participate: ‘one is actuated by the mechanisms of obligation which are rendered in the gifts themselves’ (1925:25).

By accomplishing these large projects collectively at the weekend it released the grower’s time during the remainder of the week, thereby contributing to the viability of the scheme. Sometimes as many as twenty-five people participated in the COCA Work Days over the course of the day. In contrast, though, the regular weekly harvest days were less well attended:

Did I lull you all into a false sense of security last week saying that we had plenty of help for harvesting? Well this week was quite the reverse and to be honest was a bit of a struggle

posted by the Membership Secretary on the COCA Blog

Source: <http://www.coca-csa.org/blog>

Nost, who studied CSAs in North America, has referred to this unpredictability as ‘(t)he spotty reliability of volunteers’ (2014:158). A key participant at Hazlehurst expressed her frustration at the capricious nature of volunteers:

I don’t know if this is relevant to your topic but, um, because it’s a voluntary organisation, people don’t approach their attendance in the same way as they would if they were being paid

Becky, Hazlehurst

Andreatta et al. have also noted that volunteers can constitute a burden to professional growers due to their lack of growing skills: ‘(f)armers who do not have reliable or experienced CSA shareholders prefer to do the work themselves’ (2008:126). Two key growing participants at Hazlehurst concurred:

(I)t's a bit of a struggle [omits] working with volunteers who are unskilled and trying to supervise a lot of volunteers who are, you know, unskilled. Well, although people have allotments, a few people, I think the majority of people haven't, who've come to the land, haven't actually done any growing before

Bob, Hazlehurst

People were coming, um, and staying for an hour and then going [laughs]

Nancy, Hazlehurst

At COCA the long-term solution to the shortfall in labour was to host Wwoofers who were accommodated in a static caravan on the farm. Wwoofing is a worldwide movement and membership charity whereby organic farms host volunteer labourers¹³⁵. Wwoofers receive accommodation, food and basic training in organic horticultural skills whilst the host farm benefits from their additional labour:

Wwoofing has been massive, I don't think we would have done it without Wwoofers

Ben, COCA

I mean, basically, we rely on Wwoofers to keep us going

Debbie, COCA

During the peak growing season the Core Group at COCA endeavoured to ensure that the part-time grower was always supported by at least two Wwoofers (*see figure 53*); in the middle of summer when labour input was more important COCA accepted as many as four Wwoofers. The volunteers were of all ages and nationalities and had varying degrees of skills and experience. In order for them to contribute effectively Wwoofers required an additional investment of time on behalf of the grower and other key growing volunteers to initiate them into the practices of the CSA. However, by making use of Wwoofer volunteers, the Core Group significantly increased the growing capacity, and therefore viability, of the scheme.

¹³⁵ <https://www.woof.org.uk/>



Figure 53: A Wwoofer transplanting young cabbages at COCA

Source: the author

In the preceding two sections of this chapter I have discussed the *capacity* of my case studies in terms of the individuals that comprised the CSAs. I have argued that the viability of the schemes relied on a skilled and abundant supply of volunteer labour, either on the executive bodies or at the sites of cultivation. I discussed how the lack of capacity within the Management Committee at Hazlehurst caused members to feel overwhelmed and, *in extremis*, precipitated resignations from the group as individuals “burned-out”. I also described a lack of growing capacity at COCA due to the combination of poor growing skills and low participation from members. However I described how the Core Group were able to draw on additional *capacity* from an external source by utilising the volunteer labour of Wwoofers. However, despite the lack of capacity on and off the field of cultivation at my case studies, both of my CSAs managed to maintain a fragile, if temporary, stability. In the following section I argue that the resilience of my case studies relied on a level of volunteering that I maintain can be identified as a form of personal *sacrifice*.

6.5.1

CSA as sacrifice

In the previous chapter I argued that the founding principles of CSA such as mutuality, risk sharing and cooperation were being compromised because my case studies accommodated the demands of consumers in the competitive environment of the market economy. Conversely, in the following two sections I mobilise the concept of *sacrifice* to describe the multiple ways in which participants and subscribers internalised the ethics and praxis of CSA to contribute to the viability of my case studies. In the context of this study, I define *sacrifice* in two ways: firstly, as the voluntary giving up of time or other resources for ‘the common good’ such as the CSA and its members, but rarely without an expectation of obligation on those others; and, secondly, as the giving up of certain choices and expectations in relation to food provisioning and cooking practices.

I begin this discussion of *sacrifice* with a description of the growers and other key participants who were central to the execution and reproduction of the CSAs before I consider the role of those that subscribed to the schemes.

6.5.2

Production as sacrifice

Moragues-Faus and Morgan have argued that ‘new spaces’ of food such as CSAs are *overdependent on highly motivated food champions*’ (2015:1569, original italics). On many occasions during my ethnographic fieldwork I witnessed and personally participated in what I submit were personal acts of sacrifice on behalf of my CSA case studies:

Dear All

Just thought to let you know the caravan was cleaned today by Amy after the Cheks being in residence.

This took SEVEN hours because utensils were filthy with smear of veg oil on all saucepans, grater had soil bedded in the holes (they were totally organic, eating soil as well).

Now caravan is good and ready for Ricardo and Arancha, new Woofers, arriving at 13.30 tomorrow in St Davids.

All done in Goodwill for COCA.

Best regards Edwards Family. xxx

by email to the COCA Core Group, 16th February 2013

I draw on the work of anthropologist Danny Miller (1998) to suggest that in many ways volunteers and the paid growers at the two projects dedicated themselves to the CSAs as an act

of *sacrifice*. I argue that participants were principally devoted to the concept of CSA but also in support of proximate others who were either co-participants or, as subscribers to the projects, were immediate beneficiaries. Corresponding with Offer's concept of the gift (1997), the foremost site of sacrifice lies within the family unit (Miller, 1998). I argue that both my case studies resembled *extended* families whereby multiple acts of sacrifice were performed between participants and on behalf of the CSA schemes in general.

Therefore the altruistic cleaning of the static caravan by the Edwards' family represents an act of sacrifice on behalf of the soon-anticipated volunteers: 'All done in Goodwill for COCA'; however it also benefitted the extended membership of the CSA in the form of their future veg-shares that were subsequently cultivated by the occupants of the caravan. In Mauss's terms, the (so-called) gift of cleaning is publically demonstrated on the COCA blog to evoke a reciprocal gift: the effort of cleaning the caravan is expended 'to the *humiliation* of others' who are obliged through shame to repay in a different form, at some point in the future (1925:37, my italics).

Miller conducted an ethnographic study of shoppers in north London in which he proposed the idea of maternal sacrifice (1998). He observed that 'the act of shopping was hardly ever directed towards the person who was doing the shopping' (ibid:12). Miller witnessed mostly women making food purchasing decisions and meal choices on behalf of other family members; in the process they often negated their own tastes and desires. Therefore, according to Miller, 'shopping can be understood as a devotional rite' (ibid:9). He asserts that shopping is a form of 'making love' that recreates and reinforces social relations within the family on each visit to the supermarket. Consequently Miller suggests that the act of shopping conveys an *expectation* and *obligation* on other members of the family.

Miller continues that: 'the act of buying goods is mainly directed at two forms of 'otherness' (ibid:12). The author asserts that the first of these forms will be a *person* who is an object of love. The second category, though, is what Miller describes as '*cosmological* in that it takes the form of neither subject nor object but of the *values* to which people wish to *dedicate* themselves' (ibid, my italics). Therefore I maintain that participants in my case studies devoted their time and labour firstly because they supported each other as participants of the scheme but, secondly, on account of their commitment to the ideology, or *values*, of Community Supported Agriculture itself:

I joined because I'm passionate about agriculture, food producing, living with
the environment

Nancy, Hazlehurst

During the course of his ethnographic fieldwork Miller never intended to apply the concept of sacrifice; he latterly tested the theory inductively on his empirical observations. I too only perceived participation in the CSAs, including my own, as a form of personal sacrifice until I reflected on our collective experience of operating two CSAs¹³⁶. In the following section I detail multiple ways in which participants forfeited their leisure time and gifted their labour and skills in the course of my observational fieldwork. I consider the extent of this dedication and devotion to be a form of sacrifice, to proximate others and to a set of principles aligned with CSA.

Earlier in this chapter I described my experience of assembling the veg-bags for Hazlehurst at the city-centre garage location. The following participant describes her own experience of performing the same task:

I'm really concerned that people get good quality, an amount they feel is ok, that they get so much value, they get their stuff on time and all the rest of it, I'm really, really conscious of that but, you know, like I will put in, in my own bag I will put in stuff I wouldn't give to other people. I am paying for it, just the same, but I, you know

Becky, Hazlehurst

Becky is in the privileged position each week of collating the produce from the Hazlehurst growing site with other vegetables that are bought in to supplement the content of the veg-bags. Becky herself subscribes to the scheme and, potentially, could help herself to the choicest produce for her own veg-bag. However, in an act of sacrifice, Becky places sub-optimal vegetables into her own bag to ensure that other members receive the best possible produce: 'I'm really concerned that people get good quality'.

In Chapter 5 I described how the original Steering Group of Hazlehurst debated at length the set of constitutional rules that should be adopted to protect the rights of those that were employed by the CSA. Earlier in this chapter I described how each of the CSA growers received wages that exceeded the minimum wage. Unfortunately, at both of my case studies the cost of production was subsidised by the labour of the growers:

Yeah, Gareth's working for nothing. Yeah [sighs]. Yeah, we need to give recompense for the, er....

Maddy, COCA

¹³⁶ See Chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion of my personal experience of participation in the CSAs and how I identified dominant themes from my empirical data

I'm very concerned about Bob not being paid enough... he's paid a very high price

Helen, Hazlehurst

As previously mentioned, the growers at Hazlehurst and COCA were employed part-time because there were insufficient subscribers at either of the schemes to support a full-time grower's salary. However both growers worked significantly beyond their contracted hours throughout the season; their workload required additional hours of labour input, and they were not always supported by volunteers:

Hi All,

I was down the farm on Friday and its very apparent that Deri and Gareth really dont have enough labour, Gareth is putting in allot of free time again.

by email from Ben to COCA Core Group, 29th April 2013

As I described earlier in relation to the wwoofers' caravan, it was common for Gareth to gift his labour in support of his son. The grower at Hazlehurst also extended herself in order to sustain the growing cycle of vegetables for the CSA membership:

We have nearly 1000 plug plants arriving today that need to go in asap and hundreds of our own plants too. I was there yesterday and Beth has done a great job of bed prep so they are mostly all ready. Myself, Keith, Liz and Bridie are away for much or all of next week. Beth has worked 60 hours for the last two weeks - she strimmed for 8 hours yesterday! She is tired and could do with more help next week particularly. Please try to get to the land and encourage as many people as you can (the work is much lighter for a while)- we are asking the impossible of her otherwise

by email from Alan to Hazlehurst Management Committee, 20th June 2013

Therefore, despite making a commitment to the Somerset Rules¹³⁷ that attempted to protect the rights of the grower at Hazlehurst, we were unable as a Management Committee to adequately value, and therefore pay, for the combined hours that the grower worked on the scheme.

¹³⁷ See Chapter 5 for a discussion of the Somerset Rules and Hazlehurst's governance structure (p.156)



Figure 54: Volunteers weeding at Hazlehurst

Source: the author

According to Feagan and Henderson, in order for CSAs to be viable they need sufficient members to support the scheme whether they hold ‘fully shared beliefs or not’ (2009:208) (see *figure 54*). At my case studies this often meant that those with responsibility for growing and other key aspects of the execution of the schemes had to absorb the lack of member participation by over-extending themselves to the point of sacrifice. Consequently key participants frequently expressed their disquiet regarding the lack of assistance:

The bodies didn’t follow the commitment....

Sasha, Hazlehurst

I’m frustrated by people not volunteering but, then, as we’ve said before... you don’t have to volunteer as a member... that’s not a requirement, but we need to... you know, for it all work smoothly, you do need volunteers

Debbie, COCA

Drawing on the research of Lund et al. (2013), in the previous chapter I proposed that CSA members can be positioned along a continuum of commitment to the ideology of Community Supported Agriculture that I expressed in terms of their participation in the scheme.

Furthermore, Durrenberger maintains that, although subscribers may have varying degrees of commitment to the ethics and ideals of CSA, ‘members assess their membership in terms of whether they receive *their money's worth*’ (2002:43, my italics). Therefore, following Feagan and Henderson (2007) and my argument in the previous chapter, *instrumental* (financial) considerations frequently take precedence over *collaborative* (ideological) principles when members consider their subscription to a CSA:

Dear Secretary,

I am sorry to have to cancel my membership of coca. As a vegetarian family I am finding the veg share inadequate for a week and am having to top up my organic veg every week too much. I would like to take my three months notice from the beginning of March so by the end of May I will be finishing the order. I am sorry to be no longer able to support the project but times are hard.

Yours sincerely,

Joanne Moore

email from lapsed COCA subscriber to the Membership Secretary

I often look at it and think: “ohhh, I don’t think this is going to last me very long”

Cheryl, Hazlehurst

I just can’t do this, I can’t do three rotten potatoes and a half-eaten cabbage for ten quid, this is just like, you know, I can’t do this anymore

Jean, COCA

Galt concurs that ‘the equity relation stands in tension with a commodity exchange relation, in which price is affixed to a certain quantity of a good’ (2013:344). Although the model of Community Supported Agriculture provides an opportunity to market produce directly and thereby boost their viability, producers still conform to the rules of the market economy. Thus key CSA participants make personal sacrifices to deliver (*instrumental*) value for money to subscribers, such as the growers working beyond their contracted hours, even though the underlying ideological stance of Community Supported Agriculture is to share the risks of production between the producers and consumers.

Therefore the gift economy (Offer, 1997) has dual aspects: Gareth dedicates himself to helping his son and COCA members to cultivate vegetables and, by doing so, his actions encourage others to participate in volunteering. However key CSA participants are also *regarded* by the other members who subscribe to the scheme; therefore Becky believes that the members deserve

the best produce in their veg-bag and forfeits the quality of her own veg-share. During my fieldwork I observed other examples of members of the executive bodies making personal sacrifices on behalf of the CSA schemes; at COCA one of the Core Group members volunteered to raise the rate of their monthly subscription to assist the viability of the scheme:

I've increased my monthly food share payment to £50 from 1st May, as I would like to pay closer to the actual production costs.

I will be roughly working out what we think the real price should be in an ideal world, to encourage members pay more if they wish.

with thanks, Ben

by email to the author in my role as COCA Treasurer, 11th April 2013

Ben believes that the cost of a veg-share is kept artificially low to attract and retain members but he personally wishes 'to pay closer to the actual production costs'. Another Core Group member also raised their subscription and at the next General Meeting COCA subscribers were formally invited to pay what they felt they were able to contribute; this resulted in several more pledges of increased payments, thereby raising the monthly subscription income and overall viability of the scheme.

In the previous chapter I described how the Core Group at COCA established *remote hubs* for the distribution of veg-shares. The following key participants volunteered to facilitate the trial:

Hi Ben,

Following this morning's conversation we are happy to do the deliveries on Fridays to

H.west at our own expense for the time being as our contribution to volunteering until the

scheme takes off or until we are broke, whichever comes first!!

As discussed there will be odd Fridays that we cannot do but will try and give plenty of warning.

cheers

Viv & Emyr

by email to the COCA Chair

By volunteering to distribute *boxed-up* veg-shares to a *remote hub* in Haverfordwest, Viv and Emyr, in addition to their time, make a financial contribution to the CSA in the form of fuel costs beyond their regular commitment to a veg-share¹³⁸. Finally, at Hazlehurst the following

¹³⁸ The return car journey between St Davids and Haverfordwest is approximately 30 miles

member of the Management Committee gave up his holiday entitlement to support the grower at the beginning of the season; the grower required immediate assistance to plant out multiple seedlings to maintain a constant harvest over the summer and ensure that the scheme remained viable:

I took three weeks off of work for a vacation, just to do CSA stuff and I did feel myself getting, you know, I hadn't really had a break

Alan, Hazlehurst

It is evident from Alan's description: 'I hadn't really had a break' that his decision to sacrifice his holiday entailed a significant investment of his *personal resources* but he volunteers on account of his conviction to the scheme and his dedication to other CSA participants. Alan's efforts were subsequently acknowledged in an edition of the Hazlehurst Newsletter and therefore he subsequently benefitted from the regard of his peers. In the same manner that Gareth's act of cleaning the Wwoofers' caravan at COCA was publicly reported, the announcement of Alan's substantial labour input, following Mauss (1925), can be perceived as a provocation to others to volunteer their time and effort on behalf of the CSA.

In this section I have argued that key participants in my case studies such as the growers and members of the executive bodies volunteered their time and labour to such an extent that their actions can be considered a form of sacrifice. Laura DeLind describes her own experience of volunteering at a CSA in North America: '(w)e were not willing to really share the "tough stuff". In classic farmer fashion we personally absorbed the risk and gave away our labor (and our hearts) in the process' (1999:5). However, I witnessed how subscribers to the veg-shares at my case studies also made accommodations and sacrifices to the CSA schemes that I now describe in the following section.

6.5.3

Consumption as sacrifice

Kemp and van Lente maintain that 'sustainability transitions require that people accept constraints and are willing to live and behave differently' (2011:124); Hamilton claims that '(t)he necessary commitment to farmers, the community, and the future an individual must make to join a CSA *seems a sacrifice*' (1997:3, my italics). Subscribers who join CSA schemes are often unprepared for the modification to their food life-styles that it entails. As a result CSAs suffer from a high turnover of membership; in North America turnover rates of 30 to 50 percent each year are commonly reported (DeLind, 2003; Goland, 2002). Perez et al. maintain that "receiving what is available when it is available" is an integral part of the CSA concept' (2003:4) but Ostrom observes that this can often be perceived by members as 'receiving the

wrong vegetables in the wrong quantities at the wrong times' (2007:110). Goland states that members leave CSAs because they are unfamiliar with the range, quantity and choice of vegetables that they receive, some of which they may not like or 'do not match their eating patterns' (2002:19).

Members also dislike waste associated with a surplus of vegetables; Ostrom relates an experience of a CSA member in North America:

One woman coined the term "vegetable anxiety" to describe the way she felt when it was time for another csa delivery before she had used up the vegetables from the last one

(2007:113)

Galt et al. also claim that members 'did not have the skill set, desire, or commitment to prepare and cook the products' (2011:21). Ostrom has referred to these obstacles as 'supermarket withdrawal' (2007) and Laird depicts 'CSA inconvenience' (1998). Furthermore, the 'inconvenience' of CSA tends to fall disproportionately on female members of the family who take most responsibility for the purchase and storage of food, and the choice and preparation of domestic meals (Cone and Myhre, 2000; Little et al., 2009).

Therefore subscribers to my two CSA case studies had to adapt their food practices:

Q3

Are any aspects of the scheme difficult for you?

i) (please specify)

Had to change my kitchen in order to store the large volume of veg. Had to change my weekly routine considerably - including the sort of meals we cook.

response to COCA membership survey: August 2011

Ian:

What are you making? [Cheryl is cooking]

Cheryl:

Beetroot, erm, I've had quite a lot of beetroot so I've had to learn what to do with beetroot. I never normally cook beetroot [smiles], so I'm roasting it and making a soup

CSA members at my case studies had to sacrifice a degree of choice and convenience and adopt new food practices to assimilate the veg-shares into their kitchen life-styles. Cheryl obtained the recipe for beetroot soup by conducting an internet search; she is obliged to adapt to receiving vegetables that she is not accustomed to, in quantities that she would not necessarily choose:

‘I’ve had quite a lot of beetroot’. Lamb asserts that CSAs ‘require that people who participate be personally willing to give up old habits of thought and action regarding the production, distribution, and consumption of food’ (1994:10) whilst Cone and Myhre maintain that ‘longer-term shareholders had either the determination to adjust their lives to the demands of membership or had an easier time of "supermarket withdrawal"' (2000:191). Cheryl demonstrates how she is learning to accept new styles of provisioning and cooking that accord with her values of sustainability. Russell and Zepeda contend that ‘willingness, or even desire, to change is part of what defines a returning CSA member’ (2008:144). In Chapter 7 I reflect on the transformative potential of Community Supported Agriculture with regard to consumer attitudes and expectations.

Apart from adjusting to different food practices, it was also necessary for members to accept *seasonal* variations in their veg-shares:

(I)t’s a big life choice, I think, to say: I’m going to start eating stuff that’s seasonal

Becky, Hazlehurst

(T)here’s a lot of misunderstanding about the fact that you’re not going to get twelve months of perfect vegetables

Annie, COCA

In particular, members had to become accustomed to the so-called ‘hungry gap’, a period at the beginning of the calendar year approximately between March and May when the veg-share diminished in quantity; the previous season’s harvest had been exhausted and, apart from kale and other hardy brassicas, few crops were available:

The Hungry Gap

Eating with the seasons is great in August, and not bad in December, but April and May can be a real challenge. Unfortunately this year due to the weather this has extended into June and July. It is therefore vital that as members we remain supportive to ensure that we are able to continue to raise funds for an additional poly tunnel to extend our growing season.

This was a full share for the week starting May 4th, before the Jet Stream shifted south and abolished summer.

- 2kg potatoes
- 2 onions
- 560g carrots
- 170g radishes
- 2 leeks
- 40g stir-fry mustard greens
- 110g purple sprouting broccoli
- Cauliflower
- Bag of lettuce
- Bag of rocket
- Beetroot
- Spinach

The heavy toll from the dreadful weather is clear from the much smaller share on July 6th:

- 1kg potatoes
- 600g carrots (bought in)
- 150g carrots (home grown)
- 500g onions (bought in)
- Mangetout

By paying the same amount every month, members are providing COCA with a stable income, which is essential to meet the continuing costs of production

excerpt from COCA Newsletter: Summer 2012

The Core Group at COCA placed this article in the regular newsletter because they were concerned that members would lose confidence in the scheme once the volume of their share reduced during the prolonged winter conditions. The Core Group emphasise that membership of a CSA consists of a stable commitment that includes sharing the impact of poor weather on their veg-shares: 'It is... vital that as members we remain supportive... to meet the continuing costs of

production'. By remaining loyal to the scheme during adverse conditions, COCA members continued to pay the salary of the grower and maintain the long-term viability of the scheme, despite not receiving large quantities of vegetables in their veg-share. Dyck relates how members of a CSA in Canada supported the scheme during inclement weather:

Winnipeg experienced its coldest summer on record during the first year of its CSA. Although leaf and root crops were strong, none of the 5,000 tomato plants could be harvested. Even so, the following year 75 per cent of Farmer Dan's sharers renewed their commitment, and some even sent unsolicited financial contributions to help their farmer

(1994:58)

At my case studies members who had embodied volunteering experience at the growing sites were more disposed to develop their own appreciation of the natural agricultural cycles:

I don't mind not having much in the way of vegetables at certain times because I fully understand the whys and wherefores... I know people who want to withdraw because for them it's, um, they considerate in the expense but, then, they're not involved in the actual, they don't participate

Fiona, COCA

In addition to transmitting knowledge regarding the 'hungry gap', both of my case studies emphasised continuous commitment to their schemes:

Veg share "holidays". Members who wish to take a "holiday" for up to 3 months are asked to find someone else to take their veg. We ask that you maintain your Standing Order and make any financial arrangements between you and the people who get your veg share. We will provide you with contact details for a few people at the top of the waiting list.

excerpt from COCA Membership Pack, 2012

COCA requested that members ensured continuity of income to the scheme by transferring their veg-share to neighbours or friends when they wished to take a holiday. Hazlehurst initially took a more *instrumental* approach satisfying conventional consumer expectations by allowing subscribers to opt out of the scheme for several weeks at a time. Apart from being difficult to administer financially and practically, these veg-share holidays disrupted the cash-flow of the scheme, thereby impairing its economic viability. Consequently Hazlehurst also requested that their subscribers demonstrate their commitment to the scheme:

We are no longer refunding VegBag holidays. We ask that you find friends or family to use your bag when you are away. Alternatively let us know that you don't want your bag delivered that week and we will donate it to one of our many local volunteers or to one of the local organisations we work with (e.g. the Gleadless Valley Community Forum) which will allow people access to local organic veg who would not otherwise. We appreciate this is unusual and inconvenient but. We would have to increase prices by 5% to cover this otherwise. Keeping prices as low as possible allows more people to access local organic veg

email to veg-bag subscribers from Hazlehurst Management Committee

The Management Committee at Hazlehurst accepted that this approach could be unpopular and perceived as unconventional: 'We appreciate this is unusual and inconvenient'. However, by not offering veg-share holidays the executive bodies at my case studies sought to ensure the viability of each CSA: 'this will save us £1000 per annum'; and it further differentiated the projects from mainstream, market-orientated (*instrumental*) veg-box schemes that allow customers a higher degree of flexibility in their purchasing decisions. The following member at Hazlehurst articulates that membership of the scheme has value beyond the content of her veg-share and is prepared to forfeit her veg-share if necessary:

(Q)uite honestly, just as a consumer, if I ended up, which I have done in the past, if I ended up giving the veg away, I'd still be in it

Becky, Hazlehurst

Although Becky has paid a subscription for her weekly veg-share, she is willing to sacrifice its monetary value. By contrast, Jarosz in her study of CSAs in Washington State in North America, observed that members 'would not consider paying for and then sharing or giving away the surplus food they received' (2011:311). By encouraging the donation of surplus vegetables the executive bodies of my case studies also hoped that the recipients of the 'free' veg-shares might be attracted as new members to the schemes, thus further contributing to the long-term viability of the CSAs.

Inspired by their study visit to Stroud Community Agriculture¹³⁹, the Core Group at COCA initiated a Gift Box system in the Share Shed where members collected their veg-shares (see *figure 55*). The intention was to improve the experience of the subscribers when they received vegetables in quantities that were too large, or that they disliked. Conversely, it gave other members the satisfaction of collecting additional vegetables if they wished.

¹³⁹ In Chapter 4 I describe this study visit in more detail (p.112)



Figure 55: Gift Box notice in the COCA Share Shed

Source: the author

In these multiple acts of material donation subscribers participated in the gift economy of Community Supported Agriculture (Offer, 1997) by attaching a new, non-monetary, value to their veg-share and, thus, contributing to the viability of the scheme. Arguably, the vegetables that members dislike have a negative value because they are discarded. However, through the altruistic act of gifting, members demonstrate that they are prepared to sacrifice their monetary worth (or cost) to allow others to appreciate their vegetables and are thereby participating in one aspect of the diverse economy of Community Supported Agriculture (Gibson-Graham, 1996).

In this final section I have described how members of my two case studies made a range of sacrifices to accommodate the parameters of the CSA schemes such as accepting limited choice, unpopular vegetables, and seasonality of produce. I have argued that, in part, the viability of my case studies depended on members accepting and adopting the praxis and ethics of Community Supported Agriculture and undertaking a long-term commitment to the schemes.

6.6

Conclusions

In this chapter I developed my previous arguments concerning the role of *social capital* within Community Supported Agriculture and the tension between *instrumental* and *collaborative* approaches to CSA by discussing the *viability* of my two case studies. I argued that the viability of both my CSAs relied on the *capacity* of volunteers to an extent that I identified as a form of *sacrifice*. I argued that the relative lack of *capacity* and range of *sacrifices* that the model of Community Supported Agriculture demands hinders its potential to promote resilience and contribute to transition to a more sustainable and localised form of agriculture.

I began the chapter by outlining key economic concerns that were common to each of my case studies in their nascent phases and as the schemes developed. I described *financial considerations* regarding expenditure including wages; pricing strategies for veg-shares; and sources of grant funding. I then located CSAs as a form of *social enterprise* and I subsequently described how COCA used grant funding to establish a Food Co-Op in a nearby primary school. I used this example to demonstrate the conflict between social objectives: ‘doing good work for the world’ (p.194), such as devoting time and labour resources of the CSA to connect with local school communities, versus the necessity to remain sufficiently enterprising to ensure the long-term viability of the scheme.

I then introduced the post-structuralist concept of *diverse economies* comprised of trading interactions that extend beyond currency-based commodity exchange (Gibson-Graham, 1996). I argued that the multiple forms of veg-share transactions present at each CSA defined them as a type of *diverse economy* and contributed to the resilience and transformative potential of my case studies. I described how some veg-shares at my case studies are transacted without money in the form of workshares, and how the substitution of labour for wages contributed to the viability of the schemes. In the following section I drew on Offer’s concept of the ‘gift economy’ (1997) to describe how participants of CSAs are entwined in complexities of obligation to each other through the reciprocal processes of *gifting* and *regard*.

I then mobilised the concept of *capacity* within the context of my case studies to examine its effect on the viability of my two CSA case studies. Firstly, I discussed the lack of *organisational capacity* amongst the executive bodies concerning the absence of sufficient numbers of individuals with the appropriate skills and experience to operate the schemes. I described how the administrative function of the CSAs sometimes placed impossible and unbearable demands on volunteers leading, in extreme circumstances, to “burn-out” of individuals. Secondly I considered difficulties concerning the cultivation of produce due to a

lack of technical *growing* capacity combined with insufficient support from CSA members. I discussed how the deficit in growing capacity threatened the viability of the schemes because CSA members had expectations regarding the quality of their veg-share, and how COCA adopted the strategies of Work Days and hosting Wwoofers to raise the growing capacity of the CSA.

In the final section of this chapter I used the concept of *sacrifice* to illustrate the multiple forms in which participants and subscribers internalised the ethics and praxes of Community Supported Agriculture to contribute to the viability of my case studies. In the first section I described the growers and other key participants who were central to the execution and reproduction of the CSAs. Using examples such as the cleaning of the Wwoofers' caravan at COCA and transporting veg-shares to *remote hubs*, I demonstrated how key participants at my case studies routinely sacrificed their time, money and labour for the benefit of the CSA. I then argued that the viability of Community Supported Agriculture also depends on subscribers making a range of sacrifices such as accepting limited choice, variable quality and unreliable amounts of produce in their veg-shares. Thompson and Coskuner-Bali claim that CSA members 'experience its pragmatic inconveniences and choice restrictions as enchanting moral virtues' (2007b:275). In this manner members who remained loyal to the schemes learned to accept and perform the values and praxis of Community Supported Agriculture contributing to its resilience.

In this chapter I argued that, despite the lack of *capacity* at both CSAs, they still maintained a fragile, circumstantial, and temporary functionality and *viability* that was achieved through acts of personal *sacrifice* by members that extensively gifted time, labour and skills:

(W)e haven't actually lost any money yet and amazingly the place is still floating

Maddy, COCA

Therefore, although the financial condition of both of my case studies was unstable and precarious, they ultimately remained economically viable. Although each of my case studies remained resilient, I argued that their transformative potential was inhibited by their delicate and indeterminate viability.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

7.1

Introduction

In this final chapter I return to my main research question to consider the potential of Community Supported Agriculture to promote *resilience* and contribute to *transition* to a more sustainable and localised form of agriculture in the UK.

Firstly, I provide a discussion of my three results chapters: *Community and Social Capital*; *Moral Economy*; and *Viability, Capacity and Sacrifice* and I relate the concepts of *resilience* and *transition* to my empirical findings. I discuss to what extent and how my CSA case studies are constituted and reproduced by *community*; I describe *moral* and *operational* tensions between *ethical* principles and *market* values that are inherent to the *moral economy of CSA*; and, in the context of the foregoing arguments, I examine the *viability* of my case studies with regard to the *capacity* of those that participate and *sacrifices* that CSA membership imposes.

Secondly, I develop the arguments in my preceding discussion to consider the *transformative potential* of my CSA case studies in particular, and the social movement of Community Supported Agriculture in general. I then summarise my main research findings according to their *empirical*, *conceptual* and *practical* significance. I continue by situating my findings as a *contribution* to the academic literatures of Alternative Food Networks; Community Supported Agriculture; and Socio-technical transitions and Grassroots Innovations. I then describe the *limitations* of my research concerning my data set and the scope of this study and I propose possible avenues of *future study* relating to Community Supported Agriculture in the UK.

Finally, I conclude the chapter by making some observations regarding the *transformative potential* of Community Supported Agriculture in relation to my case studies, and with regard to the broader movement in the UK.

7.2.1

Discussion

In this section I discuss my main research findings, including empirical examples derived from my fieldwork that I cited previously in my three results chapters. In these chapters I employed key themes such as *social capital*, *moral economy* and *viability* as analytical frameworks. As described in Chapter 3, I applied Strauss and Corbin's Grounded Theory (1990) marshalling themes that were dominant amongst my interviewees' responses which I developed in conjunction with appropriate academic literature. I now return to my main research question: *What is the potential*

of Community Supported Agriculture to promote resilience and contribute to transition in the UK? to consider how my results chapters intersect with the concepts of *resilience* and *transition*.

In Chapter 2 I introduced the concept of social resilience. I described how Holling's (1973) ecological explanation of resilience translated to the social sciences as it was adapted to the context of communities (Adger, 2000). I outlined how the concept of resilience has since been employed across a range of disciplines to the extent that it has become a 'fuzzy' concept (Scott, 2013), although most definitions include 'overcoming adversity' (Buikstra et al., 2010). In particular, a recent distinction has arisen between "bounce back" and "bounce forward" interpretations of resilience (Manyena et al., 2011). With regard to Community Supported Agriculture I utilised the evolutionary forward-reading of resilience to signify the movement as a radical intention of change in localised food supply systems (Shaw and Theobald, 2011). I described how Hazlehurst and COCA both had radical intentions but limited resilience due to a lack of capacity.

In tandem with resilience I also utilised the concept of transitions. Rip and Kemp (1998) theorised a multi-level perspective of transition as a process of reconfiguration that overcomes inertia and, or, impending crisis in dominant socio-technical regimes. Mounting pressures on an existing structure such as food supply chains make it more susceptible to innovation (Geels and Schot, 2007); these forces can be exerted from niches below (consumer-led action) and from landscapes above (climate change, oil-dependency, population growth) (Marsden, 2013). I argued that Community Supported Agriculture can be positioned as a microlevel grassroots innovation (Seyfang and Smith, 2007) that has the potential to remodel unsustainable mezzolevel food supply regimes. I described how transitions can take different forms such as replication; scaling-up; or niche to regime change (Haxeltine and Seyfang, 2009).

In the following three sections I relate the concepts of *resilience* and *transition* to the empirical findings of my results chapters.

7.2.2

Community and Social Capital

I opened my results chapters by considering the concept of *community* at my case studies. Following Firth et al. (2011), I proposed that my case studies could either be identified as *place-based* or *interest-based* communities, or a hybrid of both. I used this classification, in conjunction with Peters and Jackson's model of overlapping communities (2008), to describe communities of CSA at differing scales from the neighbourhood to the global. Drawing on the methodology of Firth et al. (2011), I used the heuristic device of *social capital* to interpret the behavioural elements of community which were the focus of my ethnographic study. I

employed a three-part typology consisting of *bonding*, *bridging* and *linking* social capital to distinguish the form of relationships that comprised the communities of CSA which I described.

I observed that community is a strong discursive element of both of my case studies. COCA and Hazlehurst both emphasised community as a central feature of the CSA's ethos on their respective websites: 'run for and supported by, the local community' and 'with the help of the local community for the local community' (p.93). I argued that my case studies can be portrayed as a 'turn to the local' (Feagan, 2007), indicative of re-embedding social and economic relations in specific locales (Sage, 2003). This is consistent with Colussi's optimistic reading of resilient communities that take intentional action to 'influence the course of social and economic change' (2000:5).

However, I discussed how both these schemes developed from pre-existing environmental groups that had overlapping and duplicate membership, and how the functioning of these original groupings such as St Davids Eco City Group was depleted once the CSAs drew extensively on the limited *social capital* of the shared membership: 'it's now fallen apart' (p.96). COCA comprised a new entity with the potential to enhance resilience and promote transition to a more sustainable form of agriculture, but the functionality of the pre-existing St Davids Eco City Group was compromised until it was ultimately displaced. I reported a similar situation at my Sheffield case study where key participants in the Transition Heeley-Meersbrook group were absorbed and subsumed initially into the Steering Group of Hazlehurst leading to a dissipation of the local Transition movement. Although both CSAs created potential for transformation in the local food system, the intensity and magnitude of effort required to instigate the schemes threatened the resilience of extant community groupings.

I then used Jacques and Collins' 'spectrum of enthusiasm and support' (2003:32) to situate CSA members along a continuum of participation from 'low end' (those who merely pay their subscription) to 'high end' (others who participate in the cultivation of vegetables or accept a role on the executive body of the CSA). I showed that all members have a shared *interest* in the CSA schemes but how only 'high-end' participants were embodied in the *place*-based communities of CSA that occur at the growing sites or, for example, at Hazlehurst's distribution garage. I argued that 'high-end' participants can be portrayed as *co-producers*, repudiating critics who maintain that CSAs are another form of passive, elitist consumerism ("yuppie chow"). In addition to those members who displayed their *interest* by subscribing to the schemes, I also illustrated how *interest*-based communities of CSA included those who bought investment shares at Hazlehurst, or COCA members who paid an annual membership fee as an expression of support but were too distant to receive a weekly veg-share.

I demonstrated how the CSAs actively engaged in the construction of community by hosting numerous and varied events on and off the growing sites to attract members to interact. I typified this activity as *bonding* and *bridging* social capital because it permitted members to become acquainted with each other but, as I illustrated with COCA's Harvest Party, these events were also intended to *bridge* to non-CSA members in adjoining neighbourhoods.

In the following section I argued that the range of CSA communities extended beyond the environs of my case studies to encapsulate communities of *interest* at extended geographical scales. I described how members of the executive bodies used *personal resources* of social capital to attract different forms of capital for the CSAs such as *professional advice* and *sources of funding*; this was achieved by establishing links with NGOs in the UK including the Soil Association, Organic Centre Wales and Co-operatives UK. For example, I described how a member of COCA was able to use his position in a local NGO to attract funding for a study visit to a well-established CSA scheme in Stroud. I depicted these communities of *interest* as a combination of *bonding* and *linking* social capital because they connected similar projects (*bonding capital*) but, importantly for the resilience and development of my case studies, they facilitated governance infrastructure and (temporary) forms of income (*linking capital*).

I characterised professional advice and sources of funding as *linking* social capital. The regulatory and institutional setting comprises part of the macrolevel landscape within which CSAs are situated. Consequently Beckie et al. also argue that 'the public sector could play a more prominent role in supporting expansion of the social and physical infrastructure... as part of a broader collaborative strategy involving public, private, and social economy sectors in the scaling up (of) alternative food networks' (2012:334). Clark and Inwood recently investigated the impact of the Ohio Food Policy Advisory Council describing 'their unique position to provide public sector and institutional support to facilitate meaningful connections in the food system' (2016:503). Morgan cites the example of the Sustainable Food Cities Network that is currently developing in the UK: 'the fact that such trans-local initiatives are emerging suggests that urban food politics could be evolving from a purely localised and marginalised alternative food politics... into something more ambitious and potentially transformative' (2015:1390).

According to Boyer:

First steps for policy makers may include actions as simple as engaging grassroots initiatives as part of official policy research and comprehensive planning, investigating external funding opportunities that support grassroots activity, and supporting forums that allow for networking between grassroots niches and regime incumbents

2015:335

Glowacki-Dudka et al. studied local food systems in the Midwest in North America (2013). They observed that ‘without linking or vertical social capital, the growth and opportunities to connect with larger systems of power and wealth are constrained’ (ibid:77). Maguire and Cartwright argue that ‘(a) community’s response to change is determined by its resilience: its resources, its vulnerabilities and adaptive capacity, *as well as by the impact of the external legislative and governance environment*’ (2008:23, my italics). In the context of resilience theory, Mullenite claims that little academic attention has been given to ‘the operation of power within socioecological systems’ (2016:383). He argues that a political ecology approach is required to determine ‘(w)ho is able to make environmental decisions, based on what knowledge, and to what ends’ (ibid). Therefore, the transformational potential of CSAs is limited by the institutional landscape in the UK, and their means of access to it.

In other parts of Europe such as France (Schlicht et al., n.d.), Italy (Rossi and Brunori, 2010) and Belgium (van Gasteren et al., 2014) there is more widespread governmental support for Community Supported Agriculture. Conversely, in the UK there is little institutional backing, although Organic Centre Wales assisted COCA with advice and funding on Community Supported Agriculture within the remit of a Welsh Assembly project called BOBL¹⁴⁰ to support organic agriculture. Organic Centre Wales also recently made a representation to the Welsh Government concerning a rural policy document. Consequently, the nation’s current 6-year *Rural Development Programme* seeks to ‘(p)romote community supported agriculture, community grown food and community gardening movements’ (2015:95). In addition, Franklin et al. draw attention to ‘the discretionary practice of front line public sector workers’ who initiate

¹⁴⁰ ‘BOBL (Better Organic Business Links) is an Organic Centre Wales project funded under the Supply Chain Efficiencies scheme as part of the Welsh Assembly Government Rural Development Plan. The project is designed to support the primary producer in Wales and grow the market for Welsh organic produce in a sustainable way. The project is developing new, emerging and existing markets for organic produce whilst driving innovation, at all levels, within the supply chain. The overall aim is to support a thriving Welsh organic sector so that the benefits of WG investment in the Organic Farming Scheme to generate agri-environmental benefits, and in the Welsh Organic Action Plan to support rural development and sustainable food production, can be fully realised’

Source: <http://www.organiccentrewales.org.uk/press-release.php?id=51>

localised food projects in the absence of over-arching policy (2016:1). There are also examples of formal policy such as the initiative Levidow and Psarikidou describe to develop ‘a Cumbrian food culture’ (2011:692) and the London Food Strategy (Reynolds, 2009). However, these strategies and policies do not specifically address Community Supported Agriculture which Tony Little of CSA Network UK claims has been ‘comprehensively and consistently ignored’ (2015).

Conversely Schlicht et al. report that in mainland Europe the Community Supported Agriculture movement appears to eschew mainstream policy intervention ‘principally due to the association of state actors with policies that have been detrimental to small-scale, organic peasant agriculture’ (n.d.:73). Echoing the trajectory of the organic movement, the authors identify a loss of independence as an additional mitigating factor. Therefore Franklin and Marsden argue that government needs to adopt ‘a much more nuanced, integrative and facilitatory role, in addition to, but separate from, its more traditional regulatory role’ (2015:940). However, La Trobe and Acott believe that niche innovations such as my two case studies will develop regardless of the institutional landscape: ‘(w)hether there is the political will to back the further development of organic farming and local food systems matters little - the community determination exists which will ensure their development from the grassroots up’ (2000:318). In Ben’s words at COCA: “we can either sit down and plan for a year, or we can just do it” (p.155).

I then enlarged my definition of CSA communities to an international scale to include extended networks with mutual and shared interests such as organic agriculture and food sovereignty. I depicted how Hazlehurst was affiliated to La Via Campesina through its membership of the UK-based Land Workers’ Alliance and how the CSA established global links with other food growing initiatives such as the BHASO scheme for HIV and Aids sufferers in Zimbabwe. I portrayed these extended communities of CSA, including my case studies and international NGOs, as a *relational*, nested form of ‘progressive localism’, whereby the local and global are dialectically reproduced, connected and sustained at different scales through networks of *linking* social capital.

I described how each CSA was also a constituent of a network of CSAs that defined community according to shared interests across spatial scales up to and including the global. I also described European and international CSA networks such as Urgenci that aim to connect individual schemes and promote the concept of Community Supported Agriculture globally. I argued that social networks had special significance for the resilience of my case studies such as membership of the CSA Network UK and Organic Centre Wales. Participation in these extended spatial communities strengthened the concept of Community Supported Agriculture

and encouraged resilience through knowledge transfer and establishing connections between geographically disparate CSA projects. Galt et al. contend that ‘knowledge production, and the availability of information generally, is a key component for the continued existence and expansion of CSA’ (2011:26) and Wald and Hill have argued that the transformative potential of AFNs will require ‘*a nimble scalar response*; one that can jump scale and contest at a variety of scales when required’ (2016:211, my italics). Although my case studies were situated in particular localities they behaved as porous communities receiving and disseminating information that stimulated and fortified their own specific projects, and the Community Supported Agriculture movement as a whole.

Nelson et al. argue that networked communities are a form of bridging social capital that allows individual projects to ‘forge a shared identity, organise around common values, and engage in collective action’ (2013:572). Allen et al. have argued that ‘(d)irectly oppositional stances cannot be successful *when they are only local*; they require the power of a broader social movement to prevail’ (2003:74, my italics). Hazlehurst and COCA both sought to expand the horizons of their projects by interacting with broader CSA communities, thereby encouraging functional resilience at different scales. Long and Murray have characterised communities that engage with shared interest groups at different spatial scales as ‘Global Localists’ (2013) and Sonnino has referred to these alliances as constructing a ‘relational’ local (2016). Hassanein contends that the resultant coalitions ‘increases citizen power and enables organizations to effect change *that they could not achieve on their own*’ (2003:82, my italics). By engaging with wider CSA networks each of my ‘Global Localist’ case studies contributed to a transition to a more sustainable form of agriculture at a scale beyond their immediate geographical locale.

In the final segment of this first results chapter I returned to the setting of my case studies to consider those who were absent from the communities who participated in the CSAs. I described the narrow social composition of my case studies that is typical of the AFN movement. I described how each of the CSAs actualized membership predominantly through word-of-mouth: ‘all the people I thought would be there were there’ (p.123). In Chapter 4 I discussed how my case studies sought to broaden the constituency of their communities reaching beyond those that I depicted as “the believers”. I discussed how Hazlehurst in particular has initiated outreach to the neighbourhoods immediately adjoining its growing site that, hitherto, had not participated in the membership of the CSA. I illustrated strategies such as “Learn to Grow Your Own Food” events and the acceptance of Healthy Start food vouchers from low-income members as an attempt by Hazlehurst to create *bridging* capital to communities in the neighbourhood of the growing site.

Marsden et al. researched the local food landscape of Stroud in Gloucestershire arguing that the progressive potential of the AFN movement is hindered by its social homogeneity (2010). Barr

and Devine-Wright observe that '(r)esilient communities may, therefore, emerge, but their constitution may... constitute a resilience based on power, prestige, position and influence' (2012:530). Consequently, Andreatta et al. have critiqued farmers markets and CSAs as 'a boutique food system for those who can afford to make these purchases' (2008:120) whilst Allen suggests that 'the idea of CSA seems anachronistic for all but the most privileged' (1999:125). Hendrickson and Heffernan have commented that '(p)erhaps the dominant logic of the system can only be rejected by those in a position to do it' (2002:365).

Authors such as Julie Guthman (2003; 2008a) have demonstrated that class and race do not preclude an interest in local food and Kneafsey et al. have stated that AFNs 'serve different groups of consumers... associated with different sets of ethical values and long-term objectives' which transcend different sectors of society (2006:3). Alkon et al. (2013) contend that cost, as opposed to lack of information, inhibits participation from low-income groups and Forbes and Harmon state that 'the price of a CSA share can be a significant barrier for many individuals and families' (2008:76). Therefore for Community Supported Agriculture to develop a resilient alternative and contribute to a socially just inclusive transition, it will be necessary for the movement to embrace all sectors of the community, regardless of class, race or income.

In this chapter I argued that the community of CSA is reciprocally reproduced at multiple inter-related scales from the local to the global. I asserted that CSA depends on different forms of *social capital* for its constitution and propagation. However, social capital is a limited and unreliable resource that, according to its availability, can either prompt or stifle the development and growth of CSA. I maintain that, although *community* is perceived as a central tenet of CSA, individual schemes face challenges to encourage and maintain the *bonding* participation of its existing membership, and to *bridge* existing divisions in society to translate CSA into a more inclusive form of civic agriculture. However Community Supported Agriculture is successfully creating *linking* networks that are establishing its reputation and disseminating best practice at local, national and international scales.

7.2.3

Moral Economy

In Chapter 5 I examined the values of my two case study CSA communities which I described in the previous chapter. I used the analytical framework of a *moral economy* to consider the values of these communities because CSAs are ostensibly predicated on ethical intentions that attempt to transcend market signals based entirely on price. However, I began the chapter by arguing that *all* economies involve a fusion of ethical and economic considerations that are mutually constitutive of each other, comprising a relationship of 'fundamental inseparability'

(Jackson, 2002:4). I then described a moral economy of food citing the instance of Fair Trade to illustrate ethical engagements between consumers and producers of coffee.

I continued by mobilising the concept of *Civic Agriculture* to situate CSA within a moral economy of food and I discussed how CSAs demonstrate an ethics of care at different scales of space and time, such as promoting stewardship of the land for future generations. By contrast, I then introduced the concept of an *ethical foodscape* that I argued is comprised of competing and sometimes incompatible moral positions. I used Morgan's (2010) example of food miles and Fair Trade to demonstrate how the ethics of a moral economy can sometimes be contradictory and contrary and I positioned individual CSA schemes along this mutable and disputed continuum of ethics.

In the following section I outlined the *moral economy of CSA* where the distinction between consumer and producer is softened; relationships are face-to-face; and exchanges are suffused with mutuality and trust. I described how CSA consumers share the risk of production with growers entering into an *equity* investment relationship that guarantees neither quantity nor quality of produce, but is permeated with additional values such as social justice for farmers and respect for the ecological limits of the natural environment.

I continued with a discussion of the *structural* tensions between a *moral economy of CSA* and the contingencies of the dominant market economy, and the range of consumer expectations that it promotes. I developed this argument by drawing on Hinrichs who has stated that socially embedded markets such as CSAs are conditioned by *marketness* and *instrumentalism* (2000). In this context I depicted a trend that has been referred to as 'the changing face of CSA' (Lang, 2010a) whereby some schemes are abandoning the founding principles of Community Supported Agriculture such as mutuality, risk-sharing and commitment, in order to accommodate consumerist market values including choice, convenience and cost.

I then employed Feagan and Henderson's (2009) continuum of *instrumental* versus *collaborative* approaches to CSA to portray this inherent *structural* tension in the functioning of Community Supported Agriculture. I argued that, in reality, most CSA approaches lie within the *functional* range across the middle of the spectrum because CSA schemes are a fusion of market and moral economies. Feagan and Henderson (2009) studied predominantly *farmer-led* CSAs in North America; however, the approaches to CSA adopted by my case studies represented the collective views of the two executive bodies rather than the individual growers at the schemes.

I argued that Community Supported Agriculture is not a separate moral economy but part of a continuum of ethics and economics that informs all markets. The rise of AFNs such as Fair Trade,

Farmers Markets and Slow Food has created a range of consumption choices that emphasise ethics and caring for others in space (local farmers; the developing world); in time (future generations); and for non-humans (other species; the natural environment). It has been argued that the defining relationship of care and trust between producers and consumers which characterises CSA has ensured the concept has evaded market capture by capitalist interests (Hamilton, 1997; Pratt, 2007). Andrée et al. claim that ‘(s)ome community-based projects challenge, and may potentially alter, neoliberalisation... by advancing cooperative (and often not-for-profit) production and consumption models’ (2015:1468). However, I also described how some CSAs are increasingly adopting practices that resemble mainstream agriculture; I identified this as an instrumental as opposed to collaborative approach to CSA. Haldy (2004) has employed a similar spectrum depicting European CSAs as more customer-orientated than their North American counterparts (*see figure 56*):

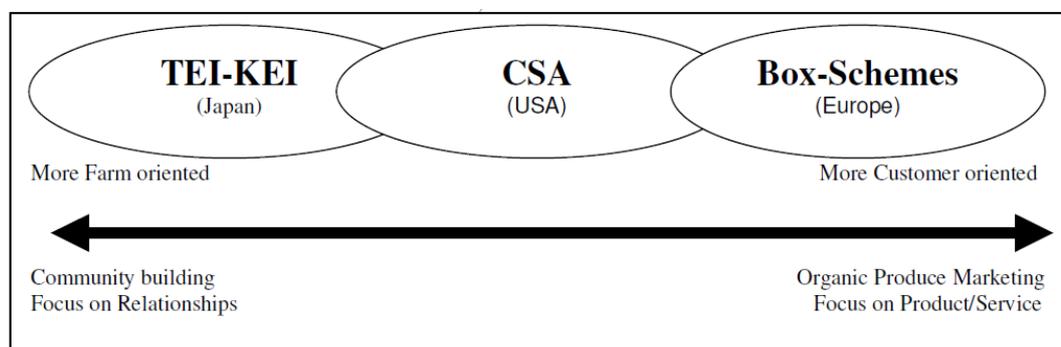


Figure 56: The customer orientation of CSAs across the globe

Source: Haldy, 2004:1

Haldy attributes the customer orientation of European CSAs to the historical precedence of conventional veg-box schemes that allow greater consumer choice regarding the content and frequency of vegetable deliveries. In this chapter I discussed how my case studies have accommodated the preferences of individual subscribers at the expense of founding principles. Charles has commented that ‘it has been necessary to temper ideals with realism and to pragmatically adapt’ (2010:363). In the case of COCA, adaptation improved the financial resilience of the project because it prevented further attrition of members who were dissatisfied with the previous arrangement of collecting their veg-share from the farm. However, it also signalled a departure from the ethics and praxis that distinguished the project from competing veg-box schemes in the local area.

My discussion and results were divided into two discrete sections. Firstly I outlined disputes that arose as the key participants at Hazlehurst sought to formulate the initial aims and moral vision, or ‘*what*’ and ‘*how*’, of the CSA scheme. I used the examples of *governance* and *permaculture* to illustrate competing ethical positions amongst the Steering Group at Hazlehurst. I described how COCA in west Wales enjoyed a higher degree of unity and

proceeded swiftly to operationalizing the CSA: ‘the consensus was: “Well, hell, let’s just get started”’ (p.155), whereas Hazlehurst debated modes of *governance* that prioritized social justice for their growers in preference to a more straightforward constitutional model recommended by Co-operatives UK. I depicted the disagreement as a choice between (*collaborative*) rights for the growers and (*instrumental*) financial considerations concerning the competitive marketing of Hazlehurst’s veg-share. I described how these ethical fault-lines created conflict amongst participants that ultimately resulted in the resignation of individuals who had intended to implement a more socially progressive and transformative form of localised agriculture. However the dispute harmed the resilience of the CSA as a growing season elapsed without substantive progress in establishing the veg-share scheme: ‘we missed a deadline for ordering stuff to grow’ (p.158). The CSA also lost key participants that reduced the organisational capacity of the scheme, although those that remained were more in accord with each other.

I also described how the debate surrounding whether to adopt *permaculture* illustrated different moral positions concerning the option to include animals in the growing cycle of vegetables. I argued that the choice to veto *permaculture* had ethical and economic dimensions, such as the oppositional stance of vegetarian members and the additional costs of animal husbandry. Therefore I maintained that this decision could be more accurately situated as a *functional* approach to CSA. Although using animals on the land could have improved the ability to fertilise the soil making it more productive and therefore more resilient to adverse growing conditions, it would also have placed additional demands on a limited number of members who already felt overwhelmed by the range and volume of tasks involved in administering the scheme; I discussed the capacity, or human capital, of CSA members in Chapter 6.

As I have argued previously, participants approach CSA membership from a variety of positions that can be morally ambiguous. Psarikidou and Szerszynski have referred to ‘the multiple and complex moral nature of the contemporary individual’ (2012b:323) and Lorenzen contends that so-called green lifestyles ‘remain fraught with contradictions, tentative solutions, and dinner table discussions’ (2012:113). Feagan and Henderson described the CSA they studied in Canada as ‘a complex and contingent food production and consumption experience *leading to partial and often conflicted beliefs, views, and practices*’ (2009:213, my italics). My case studies also exhibited tensions and disagreement regarding ethical positions such as the lengthy discussions at Hazlehurst regarding the most appropriate form of governance and whether permaculture should be adopted as a land management practice. However, Secomb has argued that disputes are healthy and strengthen the resilience of communities: ‘(i)t is only within a community that acknowledges disagreement and fracture that difference and freedom flourish’ (2000:134).

In the second section of Chapter 5 I related implicit *operational* tensions that arose at my case study in west Wales as Core Group members sought to uphold moral principles whilst meeting financial obligations including attracting and retaining a loyal membership. I applied Lund et al.'s (2013) six-part classification of organic consumers in Denmark to locate CSA members along a spectrum of commitment that corresponded to Feagan and Henderson's (2009) model of *instrumental*, *functional* and *collaborative* approaches to CSA. I described how the majority of individuals I encountered during my fieldwork can be positioned as *functional* members balancing their ethical beliefs such as support for local food with financial considerations including the quantity of vegetables that they receive: 'I often look at it and think: "ohhh, I don't think this is going to last me very long"' (p.230). However, some members could be considered more *collaborative*: 'You kind of pay for your convictions, don't you?' (p.165) whilst others adopted an *instrumental* approach that sometimes ultimately resulted in their resignation: 'The reason for us leaving COCA is that we have found the quality of the veg. to be quite poor' (p.218).

I discussed how members' *instrumental* attitudes and beliefs conflicted with the *collaborative* founding principles of COCA and how certain key ethics such as 'sharing the harvest' were partially conceded. I described how members expressed their dissatisfaction with issues including incomplete veg-shares and the inconvenience of collecting them from the remote farm location. I outlined how Core Group members responded by recommending the strategies of *boxing-up* and *remote hubs* to preserve the membership of the scheme and ensure the practical integrity of the CSA. I argued that these modifications to the practices of COCA threatened the ethical tenets that it sought to promote such as sharing the risk of production and encouraging a direct connection between producers and consumers. Charles has observed that '(t)he desire to act on a different orientation that embraces social and environmental goals can prove problematic to work out in practice' (2011:363). However, I maintained that these strategic alterations represented a *functional* approach to developing the CSA and, following Feagan and Henderson, I argued that they could be portrayed as a 'necessary adaptation and accommodation to context' as opposed to 'weakening and compromise' of COCA's foundational ethics (2009:206).

Alkon et al. have argued that CSAs rely predominantly on economic strategies based on financial exchange which tend to reproduce and substantiate the neoliberal subjectivities and consumer expectations that they are intended to replace (2013). According to Guthman, this has contributed to a counter-cultural politics that is 'so anemic at times' and therefore lacking in transformative potential (2008c:1181). Consequently Hinrichs and Allen observe that 'the individual consumer purse... has become the designated route to a better world' (2008:348).

Furthermore, Gunderson argues that a moral economy such as Community Supported Agriculture ‘does not defetishize the commodity form, but acts as *a new layer of commodity fetishism* that masks the harms of capitalism by convincing society that the harms of capitalism can be rehabilitated with the commodity form itself’ (2014:109, my italics).

However, authors such as Trauger and Passodomo have argued that initiatives such as CSAs ‘represent ways in which other communities of economies can be built and transformed through the creation of *new subjects and subjectivities*’ (2012:299, my italics). Many studies have observed the ‘graduation effect’ whereby CSA members increase their awareness of sustainability issues that initially inform their food practices and ultimately lead to behaviour change in other spheres of their lives (Cox et al., 2008; Dowler et al., 2010; Feagan, 2008; Torjusen et al., 2008). Dowler et al. observed a ‘graduation effect’ on the behaviour of CSA members in Scotland: ‘people found themselves rethinking and refining *other consumption practices* to match their ethical frameworks’ (ibid:210, my italics). Starr claims that ‘social movements are long, stuttering conversations in which conversants do not begin with the same mother tongue but over time develop both linguistic and cultural literacy’ (2010:486). Therefore CSA membership informs the lives of individuals that can lead to a transition to more sustainable lifestyles. Furthermore, Hudson argues that resilience extends beyond individuals’ consumption practices: ‘CSA has the potential to allow individuals to act in a sustainable way for personal and/or regional benefit’ (2005:14). As I discussed in the previous section of this chapter, both of my case studies engaged in extended spatial networks that sought to propagate the concept of Community Supported Agriculture beyond their immediate settings.

In this chapter I argued that all markets constitute a hybrid of ethical and economic deliberations. I situated Community Supported Agriculture as a type of Civic Agriculture that forms part of an ethical foodscape. I argued that this foodscape may consist of competing and contradictory ethics and that CSA schemes can also exhibit complex and contrary morals that I depicted as *structural tensions*. In particular I focussed on two key issues of *governance* and *permaculture* to demonstrate *moral* tensions at my case studies. I mobilised Hinrich’s (2000) contention that all markets are conditioned by *marketness* and *instrumentalism* and Feagan and Henderson’s (2009) continuum of *instrumental* (economic) versus *collaborative* (ethical) approaches to CSA to portray inherent *operational* tensions in the functioning of my case studies. I used the examples of *boxing-up* and *remote hubs* to illustrate this conflict between collaborative and instrumental values.

I argued that CSA schemes continuously negotiate a spectrum of approaches to a *moral economy of CSA*. Following Jackson (2002) who depicts the mutuality of ethics and economics in all markets, Ross has described how ‘farmers form *social* relationships that inform their

economic relationships with their customers’ (2006:120, my italics). She states that ‘relationships between these farmers and their customers are both *embedded* and *market-driven*’ and that ‘economic self-interest and social embeddedness are *supportive* rather than *alien* to one another’ (ibid: my italics). However, for my case studies to maintain operational (*instrumental*) resilience of the schemes by conceding transformational (*collaborative*) aspects of the founding concept of Community Supported Agriculture, such as sharing the harvest or extending rights of the growers.

7.2.4

Viability, Capacity and Sacrifice

In my final results chapter I elaborated the arguments I introduced in Chapter 4 regarding the limits of social capital, and Chapter 5 concerning the innate tension between the ethics and economics of Community Supported Agriculture. Consequently I explored in greater depth the *viability* of my case studies as a function of their collective *capacity* and how it is dependent on different forms of member *sacrifice*.

I began Chapter 6 by stating that both my case studies faced financial challenges in terms of raising sufficient income from veg-share subscriptions to meet outgoings such as the grower’s salary, thereby interrogating the robustness of the economic model of Community Supported Agriculture. I then situated CSAs as *social enterprises* arguing that, in addition to functioning as a small business, each scheme was conditioned by social and environmental objectives, reflecting their origins in other formations of social movement. For example, I described how surpluses, or excess capital, were reinvested in the business rather than re-distributed to shareholders.

I then argued that CSA can be positioned as a form of *diverse economy* (Gibson-Graham, 1996) consisting of a variety of market and non-market transactions that, in combination, contribute to the *viability* of schemes. I described how CSAs perform the economy ‘otherwise’ by diversifying the means of exchange between producers and consumers such as the workshares that both my case studies offered to volunteer members. I described how the exchange of members’ labour for veg-shares contributed to the viability of the CSAs and I outlined my experience of collating veg-bags at Hazlehurst’s city-centre distribution garage in exchange for vegetables of variable quality, variety and quantity.

I extended the argument of *diverse economies* by describing the concept of a *gift economy* (Offer, 1997) which consists of an emotional as well as a financial bond; I described how individuals like Carol at Hazlehurst volunteered at the growing site even though they were not subscribers to the scheme: ‘she doesn’t have any veg from it’ (p.205). However, following Offer

(1997), I maintained that CSA members are entangled in networks of obligation to each other through the reciprocal processes of *gifting* and *regard*: ‘We do kind of question why we are quite so involved’ (p.204). I maintained that the *viability* of CSA depends on members gifting their time and effort extensively such as Gareth routinely volunteering his labour at COCA.

In Chapter 6 I discussed how each of my case studies struggled to maintain economic viability. Academic literature on CSAs from North America suggests that projects are more likely to succeed on the edge of large conurbations (Stagl, 2002; Wells et al., 1999); Jarosz claims this is ‘because of their appeal to well-educated, well-heeled consumers’ (2011:311). However, Hazlehurst situated on the edge of metropolitan Sheffield (population c.500,000) confronted similar difficulties establishing and retaining a viable membership as COCA near rural St Davids (population c.2000). During the period of my research both CSAs oscillated between 30-40 members who only provided enough subscription income to pay a professional grower on a part-time basis. In part, this lack of appeal can be associated with ignorance concerning the concept of Community Supported Agriculture. In Chapter 4 I discussed how membership was largely recruited through word-of-mouth, thereby restricting the reach of the projects to associates of existing members and how even members of the schemes had previously been unaware of the concept: ‘I’d never heard of CSAs, hadn’t got a clue’ (p.123). Therefore the resilience of each of my case studies was impacted by the limited ability of the scheme to attract and retain sufficient members.

I presented my empirical data in this final results chapter through two analytical lenses: *capacity* and *sacrifice*. Firstly I examined the *organisational* capacity of the CSAs; I argued that the executive bodies relied on expansive volunteerism and a range of largely untested skills: ‘It’s a learning curve, none of us have ever done this before’ (p.212). I detailed my own experience of accepting the role of Treasurer at COCA and how I increased the organisational capacity of COCA by systemising the accounts procedures with online banking and electronic spreadsheets. I described how this facilitated the dissemination of financial information amongst Core Group members and thereby contributed to the viability of the scheme. However, I also related how members of the executive bodies at times felt overwhelmed by the scale and complexity of their tasks: ‘I’ve only got so much capacity...’ (p.211) and how, *in extremis*, protracted gifting of time and labour led to the “burn-out” of participants: ‘we are unable to sufficiently keep on top of things’ (p.215).

Hoffman and High-Pippert suggest that grassroots initiatives rely on the goodwill and enthusiasm of initial participants ‘but within ‘*reasonable*’ limits’ (2010:7573, my italics). Dale and Newman argue that ‘(s)uch reliance is neither easily reproducible in all situations nor sustainable over long periods of time’ (2006:18). The resilience of the CSA case studies I

researched depended on a consistently small group of individuals, including myself, who had little or no collective business experience. Consequently Boyer states that ‘grassroots niche actors tend to devote the majority of resources to self-maintenance and intrinsic benefits, and may approach the challenge of diffusing their alternative practices with ambivalence’ (2015:321). Therefore the potential for CSAs to contribute to broader transitions is currently inhibited by the personal and collective *capacity* of those who volunteer to manage these schemes.

I also outlined the constrained *growing* capacity of my case studies derived from a limited skills base and insufficient labour at the growing sites. I discussed how the shortcomings in growing capacity threatened the viability of the schemes because CSA members had pre-conceptions regarding the quality of their veg-share that were sometimes not met: ‘I can’t do three rotten potatoes and a half-eaten cabbage for ten quid’ (p.230). However I described how neither case study compelled members to participate at the growing sites because both executive bodies believed that compulsion to volunteer would deter membership and therefore further jeopardise the viability of the scheme; I explained how COCA adopted the strategies of Work Days and hosting Wwoofers to raise the growing capacity of the CSA: ‘Wwoofing has been massive’ (p.223).

Therefore, the skills *capacity* of those who participated on and off the field was crucial to the viability of each of my case studies. The capacity, or human capital, of CSA schemes is also integral to the future growth of the CSA movement in the UK. In the following section I draw comparisons with studies from North America to consider the function of skills in the successful replication of CSAs in the UK.

According to Galt et al., ‘CSAs require a great deal of skill in a wide range of domains’ (2011:11). As I described in Chapter 6, apart from growing skills there is also a need for strong administrative expertise and the ability to relate to members of the community in a variety of ways. Galt states that ‘CSA creates burdens, including learning the plethora of skills involved and the challenges of maintaining membership’ (2011:134). These skills are peculiar to CSA; unlike conventional mono-culture farms, most schemes grow at least 40 varieties of fruit and vegetables and Community Supported Agriculture demands a high level of interface between producers and consumers, both on and off the field of cultivation. Furthermore, Brunori et al. state that entrepreneurial skills are essential to CSA ‘because of the complexity of their organization due to the range of external relations, their agro-ecological approach, their variety of products and customers, and therefore the number and variety of tasks to be carried out’ (2011:37).

In North America Galt et al. report a ‘growth in apprenticeships and internships offered on CSA farms and an emphasis in CSA in some university curricula’ (2011:11); the authors state that over a quarter of all CSA farmers have undertaken some type of formal training. At present there are no equivalent schemes in the UK, apart from the opportunity of Wwoofing that I described in Chapter 6 whereby individuals can volunteer at CSA farms to gain knowledge and experience. However, even in North America the usual method of acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge is through experimentation (Galt et al, 2011). Brunori et al. assert that ‘(w)hereas conventional farmers have to strive to comply with existing rules in the most efficient way possible, (CSA) farmers have to break the rules of the existing food regime and build new ones by trial and error’ (2011:37).

CSA participants are also confronted with the diversity and intricacy of schemes that tend to evolve in different situations, according to particular circumstances. Lang maintains that ‘American CSAs run the gamut in terms of size, cost of membership, growing methods, member involvement and produce that they offer’ (2010a:25). In Chapter 5 I discussed how the “classic” model of Community Supported Agriculture has significantly diverged and I gave the example of the different governance structures that my two case studies adopted.

Cone and Myhre observe that CSA farmers also usually bring ‘some combination of skills in education, organizing, and/or business to the process of developing and managing a CSA’ (2000:189). According to Seyfang and Smith, ‘establishing an initiative requires a particular combination of skills, key individuals and champions, resources and supportive contextual factors’ (2006:13). In Chapter 6 I described how each executive body of my case studies consisted of individuals with varying skills and different types of social capital that enhanced the viability and resilience of the schemes.

Galt et al. claim that ‘CSA is an information-intensive enterprise for a large range of knowledge domains’ (2011:26). One of my interview respondents observed:

We’re not quite making it up as we go along but we’re all learning because we haven’t done things in this way or on this scale before

Simon, Hazlehurst

Galt et al. state that ‘knowledge production, and the availability of information generally, is a key component for the continued existence and expansion of CSA’ (ibid). In Chapter 4 I discussed how each CSA took professional advice from NGOs such as the Soil Association and Co-operatives UK concerning to establish and operate a CSA. Brunori et al. argue that co-operation across farming networks will gain more importance as CSA farms seek information

from other practitioners on the broad range of skills required to operate a successful scheme (2011). Therefore replication of CSAs in the UK will depend on the exchange of knowledge in fora such as the CSA UK Network that I described in Chapter 4.

Scott-Cato and Hillier contend that ‘practical manual crafts are at the heart of a sustainable economy’ (2010:881). CSA places particular demands on growers as its success depends on supplying as wide a variety of produce for as long a period as possible in order to attract and retain members. As I described in Chapter 6, Hazlehurst and COCA both used grant funding to pay for horticultural advice and mentoring sessions for their growers. There was also support for the growers within the schemes:

He’s getting a lot of help from the Land Group I think, you know, at the moment, yeah, they’re there and they’re doing what they can, but how long everyone can keep that up I don’t know

Damian, Hazlehurst

The labour demands of CSA are considerable and, as I described in Chapter 6, most schemes rely to some extent on a combination of volunteer labour and workshares. However, this places additional burdens on the grower to train and coordinate volunteers on the field and growers do not necessarily possess the communication skills required for this role. At Hazlehurst the grower wasn’t always uncomfortable with the task of coordinating volunteers:

I found the community side of things very demanding

Bob, Hazlehurst

In Chapter 5 I described tensions within the members of the Hazlehurst executive group during the planning phase as they sought to establish how the CSA would operate. However, once vegetable production began, there was also inter-personal conflict on the field as the grower recounts:

I got a lot of personal abuse from one volunteer you’ve identified who was a very difficult character

Bob, Hazlehurst

Therefore, in addition to the complexities of growing multiple varieties of crop over an extended period of time, the grower also needed well developed inter-personal skills to manage up to fifteen volunteers during a busy work-day session. Andreatta et al. state that ‘(f)armers who do not have reliable or experienced CSA shareholders prefer to do the work themselves, from planting to harvesting, to sorting, bagging and distributing the harvest shares’ (2008:126).

The grower at Hazlehurst also doubted whether those who volunteered possessed the relevant skills:

(I)t's a bit of a struggle at working with people who have got no business experience or experience in running a farm

Bob, Hazlehurst

Bob highlights that CSAs in France have often originated in existing farm settings. In Chapter 3 I claimed that COCA was a *farmer-led* CSA although some key participants disputed my interpretation arguing that it was *community-led*, or at least a hybrid of the two. The success of the CSA movement in France where they are most numerous in Europe may depend on existing farms adopting Community Supported Agriculture as an additional marketing outlet. Therefore transition to a more sustainable localised form of agriculture comprises a form of replication taking place from farm to farm, rather than being instigated by community initiatives such as the Transition group in Sheffield or the Eco-City grouping in St Davids. As in the case of COCA, French CSAs predominantly benefit from the existing agricultural skills, knowledge and infrastructure of the host farm.

However, at COCA there were also issues coordinating those members who came to assist with cultivation at the farm:

Q.6

Are you involved with COCA in any other ways apart from collecting your veg?

I have tried volunteering but have found it difficult and unstructured

response to COCA membership survey: August 2011

Aside from the technical difficulties of raising crops, the growers at Hazlehurst and COCA both experienced difficulties managing volunteers in the field setting. Galt et al. state that CSA farmers value constructive customer relations above growing and administrative skills claiming that it was 'foundational for the success of a CSA' (2011:28). However, Ajani maintains that the community aspect of CSA can also pose a challenge to producers: '(t)hey must invest much more time into communicating with consumers and must also give up some control and autonomy' (2012:59). In contrast to horticultural or administrative skills that may be acquired, inter-personal skills are, necessarily, more difficult to cultivate. Undoubtedly one of the most challenging aspects for the future resilience of Community Supported Agriculture is how to integrate the *community* of CSA into the *agriculture* of CSA; volunteers often lack the appropriate growing skills and many proficient growers are unaccustomed to the communication skills required to direct the labour of volunteer members.

In the preceding section I have considered the viability of CSA in terms of the diverse and disparate skills that required on and off the field of cultivation. I argued that, compared to conventional agriculture, CSA demands broader capabilities that combine horticultural, administrative and social skills. I described training available in North America that has no equivalent in the UK, although CSAs also benefit from the range of skills that participants bring to them. I argued that fora such as the CSA Network UK will assume more importance in their dissemination of knowledge and best practice across the UK. I identified social skills as a particular weakness of growers who are often unaccustomed to managing the high level of interaction with members that Community Supported Agriculture requires, on and off the field of cultivation. Furthermore, crop cultivation frequently necessitates volunteer labour; members often lack horticultural skills placing a further burden on growers in supervisory roles. Replication of CSA in the UK will most likely continue at a slow pace until the requisite skills-base has been achieved through knowledge transfer and training initiatives.

In the final section of Chapter 6, I mobilised the concept of *sacrifice* to illustrate the numerous forms in which participants and subscribers internalised the ethics and praxis of CSA to improve the viability of my case studies. I described how key participants at my case studies regularly sacrificed their time, money and labour for the benefit of the CSA such as Becky foregoing the quality of the veg-share she was entitled to for the benefit of other members, and how the growers at both CSAs consistently worked beyond their contracted hours of employment: ‘Beth has worked 60 hours for the last two weeks’ (p.228). I argued that the extent of volunteerism amongst key participants, such as the growers and those on the executive bodies, can be portrayed as a form of sacrifice. At my case studies the limited ‘civic core’ (Aiken, 2012) of active participants struggled to confront potentially overwhelming practical and administrative demands. The resilience of the schemes was constantly conditioned by the availability of volunteers, and the skills base of those who participated.

I concluded the chapter by describing how CSA members who receive veg-shares also make sacrifices concerning the quality, quantity and seasonality of the produce they receive: ‘I fully understand the whys and wherefores...’ (p.236). I argued that the viability of schemes is dependent on CSA members accepting a range of sacrifices such as lack of choice, fluctuating vegetable quality and unpredictable amounts of produce in their veg-shares: ‘I’ve had quite a lot of beetroot’ (p.233). Member adjustments included appreciating the ‘hungry gap’ and making a prolonged commitment to schemes without taking ‘holidays’ from the veg-shares. I argued that members who learned to accept and perform the values and praxes of CSA contributed to its financial resilience.

Cooley and Lass maintain that ‘CSA membership is certainly not for everyone’ (1998:229); in Chapter 6 I also identified ‘CSA inconvenience’ as an obstacle to growth of the movement and I described how members had to routinely sacrifice choices in order to conform to the ethics and praxes of Community Supported Agriculture. According to Thompson and Coskuner-Balli, ‘the practical inconveniences posed by CSA participation, its noncompetitive pricing structure, its model of shared risk, and its truncation of consumer choice are all *seriously at odds with standard norms that govern marketplace relationships*’ (2007a:147, my italics). Cone and Myhre state that ‘(a)t a minimum CSA must challenge habits of purchasing, processing, and eating’ (2000:189). Perez et al., (2003) claim that most people leave CSAs on account of a lack of choice whilst Jarosz (2011) argues that members leave because they are unable to adapt to the quantities of unfamiliar produce. Although I too witnessed CSA members who left due to lack of choice and receiving too many vegetables, the most common reason for resigning from my case studies was individuals leaving the immediate area. Therefore ‘CSA inconvenience’ (Laird, 1998) was only one influence on member attrition and, thus, a contributing factor to the resilience of the CSA schemes.

In Chapter 6 I extended my previous arguments regarding the limits of *social capital* at my case studies and the latent tension between *instrumental* and *collaborative* approaches to CSA. I argued that both my CSA case studies had constrained organisational and growing *capacity* and were reliant on volunteerism to an extent that I identified as a form of *sacrifice*. I also argued that subscription to a veg-share entailed sacrifices in consumer expectations and significant modifications to kitchen practices. However, despite the lack of *capacity*, and the necessary *sacrifices*, both CSAs maintained a fragile, circumstantial, and temporary *viability*.

Finally, another significant dimension of a viable CSA scheme is secure tenure of land. Paul states that ‘(l)and is a vital input for farmers - without land, there is no soil to till’ (2016:7). At each of my case studies security of tenure was largely assured; COCA occupied land on preferential terms from the farmer who actively supported the project in numerous ways, whilst Hazlehurst was able to lease from a philanthropic land-owner who also encouraged the scheme. However the CSA movement in the UK is undoubtedly hindered by limited access to good quality growing land in accessible locations:

the growing scheme has been operating on a short-term lease near Postwick that has now ended. They are appealing to farmers, landowners, parish councils and anyone with spare land around Norwich to help them find a new site for the farm in the coming months

Source: <http://norwichfarmshare.co.uk/landoffers>

During the process of scoping case studies for this research, I was aware of another CSA in Sheffield that invested in land infrastructure and planting but, at the request of the land-owner, had to vacate its leased growing site after only one season. Liz Charles reported a similar situation at her case study in North East England:

The need for a serious change of direction occurred in December 2007 when it became apparent that the three acres of land originally identified were not going to be economically viable to rent and alternative premises needed to be found

(2011:367)

In the following section I draw comparisons between literature concerning CSAs and the land market in North America and the UK. I discuss the geographical distribution and land-holding practices of CSAs in North America and the UK to consider whether the conditions of the land market can be regarded as a more constraining factor in the UK for the replication of CSAs.

Despite the maturity of the movement in North America, Galt et al. state that '(w)e know little about the farmers and farms involved and the CSA movement's evolution in recent years' (2011:2). This dearth of information includes the value of land, and how it has affected the expansion of the movement and the geographical distribution of CSAs. In the UK, with the exception of Saltmarsh et al. (2011), there is a similar data lacuna. Ahearn and Newton considered the situation of entry farmers across North America; they argue that '(b)eginning farmers... face two primary obstacles: high startup costs and a lack of available land for purchase or rent' (2009:iii). Although CSA schemes have comparatively low startup costs as they have few mechanical and chemical inputs, they are still dependent on access to affordable land, although they require less area due to their intensive cultivation practices (Paul, 2015).

In North America there have been many studies of the economic facets of CSAs; for example Hardesty and Leff examined the cost of CSA marketing channels including 'the costs for labor, purchased goods and services, and capital assets associated with these marketing activities' but made no analysis of land costs (2010:24). Similarly, Lizio and Lass (2005) examined all costs associated with CSA operation apart from the price of land because they researched existing

farms. Polimeni et al. (2006a) used economic modelling to posit ‘a theory of supply for CSA membership’ but also did not include land prices in their calculations.

By contrast, there is a small body of literature from North America that describes the geographical distribution of CSAs. According to Schnell, ‘CSAs also tend to be found in areas with more, but smaller, farms’ (2007:555). Consequently there is a very low concentration in the Great Plains states, whereas in the Northeast, where farming is less industrial and export-orientated, CSAs are more ubiquitous (Galt, 2011; Lyson, 2004). Within discrete regions there are also spatial variations; Galt states that ‘CSAs tend to be located on the margins, rather than in the middle of, the most productive agricultural land’ because ‘land rents are based on the potential profitability of the land, and thereby can preclude more sustainable, but less mainstream, kinds of operations’ (2011:153). He also maintains that CSAs are more prevalent on the edge of conurbations as they give ready access to markets.

Jarosz claims that demand for AFNs such as CSAs is ‘pronounced in cities with well-educated residents who have high incomes and... where politics have a particularly liberal cast’ (2008:242). Guthman et al. concur: ‘our sense is that CSAs and farmers’ markets tend to develop and thrive in particular socioeconomic environments that are likely to be very similar from place to place’, such as proximity to university towns (2006:665). In the UK the most established and commercially successful CSA is located in Stroud that is also well-known for its liberal constituency (Marsden et al., 2010). Furthermore, Qazi and Selfa maintain that rural areas have ‘smaller numbers of potential consumers, especially more affluent consumers, who are committed to eating responsibly’ (2005:67).

However, Schnell observes that ‘(a)s development pressures and land prices increase on the fringes of urban sprawl... many CSA farms face the threat of being uprooted by subdivisions or strip malls, for many of them are on rented land’ (2007:556). Furthermore, Paul argues that ‘CSA farms often face land prices that reflect non-agricultural uses, resulting in significantly higher land costs per acre’ (2015:5). Over 20 years ago, whilst the movement was still in its infancy in North America, Lamb claimed that ‘small, diversified, sustainable farming operations cannot compete with industry and wealthy individuals in obtaining land’ (1994:6). Galt also suggests that farmers may experience difficulties gaining credit on land as they ‘cannot show banks the same solid data that exist for returns on conventional commodity crops grown in an area’ (2011:153). However, Ahearn and Newton have argued that CSA farmers need to be close to towns and cities as they are often dependent on higher paying off-farm sources of income which are more plentiful in built-up areas (2009:12).

Lass et al surveyed CSAs land-holdings across North America (2003); 27% of their respondents indicated they owned no land. These farms ‘reported alternative land use arrangements including rental agreements, long-term leases, and ownership by a CSA organization (other than the farmer) or a land trust’ (ibid:7). However Schnell argues that short leases make farms vulnerable to re-location and are a disincentive for CSA schemes to invest in the soil or infrastructure (2007). Apart from private land-owners, CSAs leased land from ‘non-profit organizations such as universities, churches, conservation organizations, family arrangements, housing authorities and other institutions’ (ibid). Amongst these alternative arrangements were community land trusts (CLTs) whereby ‘decisions and profits are shared among the community’ (Allen, 2010:298); According to CIAS¹⁴¹ (1999),

A land trust holds land in common so that its value can be retained for the benefit of the community. In addition to helping negotiate the purchase of the land, the trust may attach a conservation easement to the land to protect it from development in perpetuity

Paul argues that ‘community ties coupled with agro-ecological growing practices may make CSA farms more attractive to land trust and community assistance’ (2015:5). On my study visit in California I witnessed a CSA farm that was converting to a CLT in order to preserve the land in perpetuity for Community Supported Agriculture. At Hazlehurst the original purpose of the community share offer was to raise funds to purchase the land. When this failed due to insufficient interest the land-owner allowed the Management Committee to lease a portion of the land. It has also been observed that up-front annual CSA share payments give farmers the security to commit to a land lease (Hudson, 2005; Schnell, 2007).

In the UK CSAs face similar challenges of obtaining and maintaining access to suitable land in a convenient location; the Soil Association states that ‘(a) CSA cannot exist without land’ (n.d,a.:30). Saltmarsh et al. maintain that ‘(m)any initiatives cite access to land as a limiting factor in their plans for the future and this is a critical issue for developing initiatives’ and that ‘(t)he quality of land, water and soil available to initiatives is highly variable’ (2011:26). As I discussed in Chapter 6, although both my case studies had benevolent landlords, neither growing site was easily accessible to its members. Hazlehurst’s land on the peri-urban fringe of Sheffield was remote from the majority of its members although the CSA was attempting to connect with communities in adjacent neighbourhoods. At COCA the isolation of the farm deterred membership and participation, and resulted in the establishment of *remote hubs*.

¹⁴¹ Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Saltmarsh et al. claim that some UK schemes prioritise accessibility of land to its volunteers in preference to soil quality and water sources (ibid).

In contrast to parts of North America such as the Northeast where the CSA movement originated, small farm-holdings in the UK are less common. Jacques and Collins attribute this to the post-war intensification of agriculture and amalgamation of smaller farming units: '(t)his process has gone further in the UK than in any other west European country and the average size of farm-holding in the UK is significantly greater than in any other country in the EU' (2003:31). In addition, the Soil Association identify the short length of tenancy agreements; the inflated cost of land and rural housing; and restrictive planning regulations as barriers to CSAs for accessing land (n.d.,b:17). At Hazlehurst the lease was renewed yearly and, although Hazlehurst were always given the option of renewal during my research, the short tenancy created problems for the long-term resilience of the scheme:

The main problem in getting core funding is the lack of a 5 year lease.

Members did not think that we are likely to get this but agreed to discuss it with Simon¹⁴²

minutes of Hazlehurst Management Committee meeting, 14th April 2012

As I described in Chapter 6, both my case studies regularly applied for external sources of funding; the yearly lease excluded some valuable funding applications, including those that might have provided core funding for labour, thereby affecting the resilience of the schemes.

In the UK there are far fewer CSA farms occupying their own land than in North America:

In terms of land ownership, in 6 out of 22 CSAs the land was owned by the farmer and in 13 it was rented by the CSA. This reflects the fact that it is very expensive to buy land in the UK and that producer-led CSAs are often set up by farmers who already have lots of land available

(European CSA Research Group, 2016:114)

COCA (farmer-owned) and Hazlehurst (leased) reflect both these land-holding trends in the UK. Saltmarsh et al. identified four CSAs in the UK that are CLTs (2011).

In Chapter 2 I argued that replication is the most likely form of transition for CSAs in the UK. Access to land is undoubtedly one factor that is inhibiting growth of the UK movement. I have used this section to demonstrate that, although North America has a higher concentration of CSAs, there are similar constraints on land accessibility in both regions such as competition for

¹⁴² Land-owner at Hazlehurst

land on the urban fringe, difficulties in obtaining credit, and precarious leasing arrangements. The data on CSA land-holding suggests that there are more opportunities across North America to own small farm-holdings which are crucial to the initial development of CSAs. However, this factor, on its own, does not appear to account for the large discrepancy in the comparative growth of the movements over the past 30 years.

In the preceding sections I have related the concepts of *resilience* and *transition* specifically to the empirical findings of my three results chapters and latterly to the availability of land. In the following section I draw conclusions regarding the *transformative potential* of Community Supported Agriculture in the UK.

7.3

The transformative potential of Community Supported Agriculture in the UK

In the preceding discussion I examined to what extent my case studies, and Community Supported Agriculture in the UK, promote *resilience* and contribute to *transition* to a more sustainable and localised food system. I argued that community is a strength of CSA at different scales, notwithstanding that it can be exclusionary; I argued that an ethics of care underpins the potential of CSA, although these moral convictions are contested and can be contrary; and I argued that the viability of CSA schemes is dependent on participants making sacrifices that run counter to mainstream consumer expectations. In the following section I extend these arguments by considering the transformative potential of Community Supported Agriculture in relation to my case studies, and with regard to the broader movement in the UK.

In Chapter 2 I introduced the concept of multi-level perspectives (MLP) of socio-technical transitions (Rip and Kemp, 1998). I argued that microlevel 'emergent' niches become incorporated into mezzolevel socio-technical regimes such as food supply chains; I gave the example of organic agriculture that evolved from a fringe activity into mainstream practice (Smith, 2006). I described how niches can either be replicated (copied in the same form); scaled-up (increased in proportion in the same location); or make a niche to regime transition (translated into a mainstream form) (Haxeltine and Seyfang, 2009). Authors such as Julie Guthman argue that organic agriculture has made the former transition, losing its progressive potential in the process of 'conventionalisation' (2004a).

According to Shove and Walker, '(t)he notion of transition is firmly rooted in traditions of system thinking which highlight the coevolution of the social and the technical' (2007:763). I critiqued the MLP model as overly techno-centric, lacking a community perspective, and omitting an analysis of the political economy of transitions. I presented *grassroots innovations* as a more nuanced reading of transitions that, in particular, accounts for the agency of

community in transition theory (Seyfang and Haxeltine, 2012); I framed CSAs as a form of grassroots innovation that has the potential to cohere into a socio-technical transition. Brunori et al. maintain that CSAs belong to a range of AFNs that have emerged as ‘post-organic movements’ which comprise a new wave of developing niches (2011).

I stated that replication is the most likely form of transition for CSAs in the UK. I claimed that replication allows the movement to remain economically and politically autonomous; that large-scale CSAs are less profitable; and that mainstream conversion is likely to erode the progressive potential of Community Supportive Agriculture. Boyer concurs that replication is ‘by far the most frequently observed pathway in empirical accounts of grassroots innovation’ (2015:322). Sonnino and Griggs-Trevarthen studied five local food enterprises around Oxford and made similar findings: ‘the only real scope for expanding the social economy is about knowledge-transfer and the replicability of the model – that is, creating opportunities for alternative ideas to travel to other areas’ (2013:286). The authors continue that ‘social enterprises cannot grow to be bigger than the community of volunteers and of ‘committed customers’ on which they depend’ (ibid). Seyfang and Smith have also suggested that the ‘key benefit of grassroots innovations, namely, the ‘world within a world’, undermines diffusion’ (2007:597). Therefore the community that is at the nucleus of a CSA is also the limiting factor in its expansion.

Wilson claims that the success of schemes such as CSAs ‘relies in part on the trust and commitment of those involved, to believe that such a possibility is, in fact, possible and to commit to making it happen’ (2013:734). In Chapter 4 I discussed the limited constituency of my case study communities that can be characterised as “the believers”. Sonnino and Griggs-Trevarthen contend that ‘(t)he limited size of the local demand for community food products... is especially an issue’ (2013:286). Both of my case studies struggled to grow and retain their membership despite marketing the schemes in a variety of ways such as leaflet drops, social events and direct emails. North has argued that innovative schemes such as CSAs are ‘too small scale, too hidden from view, and involve too few people promoting lifestyles that are not attractive enough to millions to trigger a systemic move to a low-carbon economy and society’ (2011:1595). My research suggests that, although Community Supported Agriculture in the UK has transformative potential, it, too, is presently constrained by a lack of broader appeal. In North America where there are in excess of 10,000 schemes, CSA still represents less than 1% of total farms (Paul, 2015). In the UK there are presently fewer than 100 schemes; the European CSA Research Group estimate that this equates to approximately 10,000 individuals who have access to a CSA veg-share in the UK (2016).

Michael Carolan has referred to the “more than” of local food systems’ (2011:48). For example, Forbes and Harmon describe the ‘less tangible benefits’ of CSA membership such as

supporting local growers and promoting environmentally sensitive stewardship of the land (2007:76). Kirwan et al. have highlighted the value of non-material benefits of local food systems such as ‘processes of social learning, empowerment, local democracy, social inclusion and the development of skills and knowledge at both an individual and community level’ (2013:830). In Chapter 6 I argued that CSAs depend on members internalising the ethics and praxes of Community Supported Agriculture. Hayden and Buck contend that CSA membership can result in a ‘general consciousness-raising’, including ‘a greater awareness of natural and societal interconnections that spurred them *to change everyday behaviours*’ (2012:338, my italics). Moragues-Faus claims that ‘participating and “doing” are in themselves pedagogical processes that build critical and political consciousness’ (2017:470). The ‘graduation effect’ within Community Supported Agriculture is well documented (Cox et al., 2008; Dowler et al., 2010) and my case study research supports this understanding; Hazlehurst and COCA are contributing to personal transformation that has a modest aggregate effect in each setting.

In Chapter 4 I described how my case studies also extended their spatial ambit by engaging in extended networks of Community Supported Agriculture. I argued that the resilience of my case studies was strengthened by networks of CSA communities at regional, national and international scales. Westley et al. claim that ‘advances in information and communication technologies can play a significant role in providing platforms for the stimulation and integration of the ideas as well as mobilizing collective action at key moments of opportunity’ (2011:776). Press and Arnould describe web-based communication as ‘a specific kind of modality of cultural transmission’ (2011:186); they argue that it is important for the growth of social movements because ‘the Internet incorporates a lessened asymmetry of power’ (ibid). Therefore Bos and Owen claim that ‘embodied, socio-material reconnection processes that occur *in-place* also occur online’ (2016:1, original italics). However, they caution that these interactions ‘need to be understood as supplementary rather than as a substitution for sociomaterial reconnections’ (ibid). My case studies exploited the transformative potential of social networks engaging in online CSA platforms and broader movements such as food sovereignty. By networking with communities of interest, Hazlehurst and COCA created a community of CSA from the neighbourhood to the global scale which shared and communicated the transformative potential of Community Supported Agriculture.

A further aspect of socio-technical transitions relates to the institutional landscape that niches reside within. Franklin and Marsden have described a disconnect between local government actors and community sustainability activists (2015). They argue that, in part, this is intentional as grassroots initiatives are keen to maintain their independence: it ‘supports an ongoing freedom for community groups to pursue and promote alternative forms of sustainable living’

(ibid:943). Conversely, Franklin and Marsden claim that the absence of linking social capital between these actors inhibits sustainable place-making. The authors argue that, paradoxically, scaling-up of local initiatives to city-wide strategies will not succeed until they have been adequately *scaled-down*; they maintain that ‘effective links being made between the community actors and local government officers’ and ‘integration between the various initiatives’ is a prerequisite of a coherent grassroots sustainability movement with transformative potential (ibid:953).

However, Slade and Carter have stated that ‘local government capacity to respond is limited without higher-level whole-of-institutional commitment’ (2016:108). The authors maintain that regimes cannot transform unless the dominant landscape of the political economy is substantially reconfigured to admit change: ‘the question becomes what is achievable for any institution in a neoliberal context’ (ibid). As I described in the previous section, overt political support at any scale for Community Supported Agriculture in the UK is currently lacking, although some strategies and policies broadly encourage pro-environmental initiatives without providing specific support for CSAs.

In the context of North America, Galt et al. have argued that ‘CSA is a very bright spot in the current economy’ (2011:iv); CSA reconnects producers and consumers; encourages environmentally-sensitive farming practices; and promotes social justice for growers (ibid). Allen states that ‘(l)ocal food systems... can embody and demonstrate possible alternatives *when other options for change seem foreclosed or beyond reach*’ (2010:305, my italics). According to Trauger and Passodomo, these spaces are where ‘a dialogue about how to do a “community economy” of food in which consumers and producers are situated in a knowing and mutual reliance’ can occur (2012:299). Crossan et al. researched Community Gardens in Glasgow (2016). Whilst they conclude that Community Gardens are susceptible to neoliberal cooption, they also identify them as collective spaces of “Do-It-Yourself” (DIY) Citizenship ‘that offer us a glimpse of what a *progressively transformative polity* can achieve’ (ibid:1, my italics). By contrast, Wald and Hill ‘question whether local actors necessarily have the capacity to successfully challenge dominant economic systems or whether they will instead simply reduce some of its worst excesses’ (2016:206).

Hinrichs claims that local food systems ‘represent modest socio-economic, cultural and environmental shifts in encouraging directions’ (2003:43); CSAs constitute an example of ‘new possibilities for intervention’ (Jackson, 2002:3). Smith observes that organic agriculture which ‘was once dismissed as ‘muck and magic’ is today a serious international business prospect’ (2006:455). He argues that although microlevel niches are ‘appropriated to various degrees by a

multitude of actors with different material interests and social values', they resurface in different manifestations that apply enduring pressure on untenable socio-technical regimes (ibid).

Community Supported Agriculture can be considered as one successor to the original counter-cultural organic agriculture movement which continues to challenge the hegemony and unsustainability of conventional food supply chains. Brown et al. have suggested that grassroots innovation niches such as CSAs 'might be figured as the 'cracks' through which a more radical challenge to neoliberal capitalism might emerge' (2012:1620). Consequently Ostrom maintains that '(r)egardless of whether csa persists in its current configurations, its lasting legacy may turn out to be *the ideas it has set in motion*' (2007:118, my italics). Furthermore, Hassanein asserts that 'there are no clear, practical alternatives to incremental change at this time' (2003:84).

Community Supported Agriculture may assume more importance in terms of food security as synergistic factors such as climate change, oil-dependency and population growth affect the sustainability of industrialised food supply chains. Simon at Hazlehurst remarked that 'if conditions get a lot worse [nervous laugh], whatever, climate change, peak oil, economic collapse kind of reasons, it is actually then, ok, there is all this land there in Sheffield, so, it's possible' (p.1). Both of my case studies are still operating in their respective settings and, to a certain extent, have demonstrated the transformative potential of Community Supported Agriculture as an alternative to mainstream food provisioning. However, each of the schemes has been limited to a small number and limited constituency of individuals that largely conform to expectations of CSA membership along the privileged lines of class, education and income. In the short-term, Community Supported Agriculture in the UK is unlikely to thrive without greater participation from a larger proportion of the community, within a more conducive policy environment.

In this section I argued that the transformative potential of CSAs is circumscribed by the community within which a scheme resides. I claim that niche to regime transformation of CSAs will proceed through replication of schemes, as opposed to CSAs growing larger or becoming incorporated into mainstream food regimes. Therefore, I maintain that Community Supported Agriculture is more likely to be 'scaled out' rather than 'scaled up' (Johnston and Baker, 2005).

I stated that CSA currently lacks broad appeal due to its countervailing values. Conversely, I argued that membership of CSA informed and influenced the consumption behaviours of existing members that reached beyond the realm of food. I claimed that extended CSA networks were also transformative in their role as a bridging conduit of knowledge and practices. However, I argued that CSAs need to establish linkages to institutional actors to increase their presence and impact. I stated that the diverse economy of my case studies, although limited in scope, has the potential to transform local economic relations. I argued that Community

Supported Agriculture may not coalesce into a discrete and coherent socio-technical transition, but indicates future pathways to sustainability.

7.4.1

Research findings

Thus far in this Conclusions chapter I have provided a discussion of my findings in terms of key concepts such as *resilience*, *transition* and *transformative potential* in relation to my main research question: *What is the potential of Community Supported Agriculture to promote resilience and contribute to transition in the UK?* I now summarise my main research findings that I distinguish in three ways. Firstly as *empirical* to describe the results of the fieldwork that I conducted at my case studies; secondly as *conceptual* in terms of their theoretical significance to existing academic knowledge; and lastly *practically*, according to how the findings may inform future practice and policy for individual CSA schemes and the Community Supported Agriculture movement in the UK.

7.4.2

Empirical findings

In Chapter 4 I used social capital as analytical framework to describe the communities of my case studies. I portrayed different forms of social capital such as *bonding*, *bridging* and *linking* (Firth et al., 2011). Community in its different manifestations is essential to the maintenance and reproduction of Community Supported Agriculture and, yet, my study demonstrates that social capital in its different forms is a fickle and finite resource that can benefit or hinder the development of a CSA, depending on its availability and extent.

For example, I described how Sasha's involvement with the Environmental Justice Fund in Sheffield created bridging links to a source of financial capital that funded the important role of Project Manager at Hazlehurst. I also depicted favourable relationships that COCA enjoyed with a funding body in Pembrokeshire:

Nick helped to write a funding application for Pembrokeshire and PAV Fund,
the first that one that we got, I think he wrote, that so that was handy

Ben, COCA

However, social capital could also have a limiting influence. I discussed how the overlapping communities, and energies, of the existing sustainability groups folded into, and were ultimately subsumed by, the activities and demands of the CSA schemes:

the most active people then took on... setting up the CSA and didn't do anything more for the whole Transition movement

Sasha, Hazlehurst

Therefore, the community of a CSA and the social capital that it comprises of, and has access to, is simultaneously an enabling and constraining factor in the success of Community Supported Agriculture. Community is both a resource of Community Supported Agriculture and an impediment as its membership is fluid, unstable and unreliable.

As a corollary, my research also confirmed the limited social composition of CSA membership, notwithstanding efforts by my case studies to extend participation to neighbourhoods and constituencies that were unrepresented:

When groups happen they can very easily get comfortable with what they've got and they become less inclusive, don't they? I think it's something to kind of be aware of all the time

Bardy, Hazlehurst

Although Hazlehurst and COCA both sought to extend inclusion, the membership was predominantly homogenous in terms of race, class and income, and in Sheffield the CSA membership was also largely confined to a geographical area known as the Green Triangle, reproducing and reinforcing existing social ties. Consequently, my study augmented evidence that CSAs mostly recruit membership by word-of-mouth through extant social groupings (Forbes and Harmon, 2007):

I was aware because I knew Maddy and every time I saw her she said: "Come on, you must come down, you must come down"

Debbie, COCA

The limitations of community at my case studies is a research finding that corroborates plentiful CSA studies from North America (Brehm and Eisenauer, 2008; DeLind, 2003; Guthman, 2008a; Ostrom, 2007). By contrast, my study revealed that the community of my case studies is reproduced at multiple scales ranging from the immediate membership of the veg-share scheme up to trans-global social movements. For instance, Hazlehurst aligned itself with social justice issues concerning access to food: '(w)e see ourselves as part of the global movement for Food Sovereignty' (p.117) and '(w)e would like to use our global food growing network to share our knowledge, skills and ideas with each other' (p.118). I depicted these networks as a form of 'progressive localism' (Featherstone et al., 2012) that recognises and exploits the linking capital of local food initiatives with global struggles for social equality and food justice.

Allen and Wilson claim that ‘(a) sense of place can develop a consciousness of linkages and a positive integration of the global and local’ (2008:538). Although my case studies were manifestly embedded at a micro-scale, they forged dialectic and mutually constitutive relationships with actors in global food networks. Sonnino has argued that hitherto there has been ‘little consideration for the connections and disconnections between different alternative food networks and their combined potential for wider regional development’ (2016:197). My research suggests that, in the realm of Community Supported Agriculture, these linkages are currently being established within the UK, and that they have practical and symbolic value for individual CSA initiatives and the broader movement as it develops.

In Chapter 5 I described how the ethics and practice of CSA is countervailing to dominant consumer values: ‘It’s a different way of living, actually’ (p.164). Following Lund et al. (2013), I demonstrated how CSA members fall along a spectrum of commitment to the scheme from those at the low-end who subscribe to the veg-share but do not participate in any way, to other members who accept a voluntary position on the executive bodies. However, for most people, Community Supported Agriculture is not an attractive proposition due to the constraints it places on individuals concerning choice, convenience and cost.

Johnston has referred to the “citizen-consumer” hybrid to describe personal approaches to ethical consumption (2008). My research illustrates that CSA members continually navigate the spectrum of commitment, oscillating between citizen and consumer according to their individual needs and circumstances. Middlemiss has argued that each person has an ‘ecological footprint’ that varies ‘according to their capacities and the capacities of the structures that they inhabit’ (2010:163). For example, this member at COCA describes how she would not commit to collecting her veg-share:

Well, I do a mental calculation, time and fuel and I think: oh it’s Monday so I’ve missed the variety

Elaine, COCA

I discussed how unused veg-shares disrupted the scheme at COCA leading to waste and a loss of trust between the grower and the members: ‘Yes I’m annoyed !!!!!’ (p.166) and I described the ‘ideological imbalance’ (Hudson, 2005) that occurs as members navigate the ethics and quotidian practices of CSA. Schnell claims that CSA members are ‘balancing many different, sometimes contradictory concerns, and making decisions about food within the complexities of the real world’ (2013:620). My research reveals that the progressive potential underlying the collectivist ideals of Community Supported Agriculture is undermined by individualist decisions:

There's people around here who are incredibly consistent and I always call them 'worthies', the people that are absolutely straight down the line, completely this or that. Yeah, they can be really boring, actually, 'cos they make you feel guilty. You've all got, none of us are consistent about everything, are we?

Becky, Hazlehurst

I also demonstrated how the ethics of Community Supported Agriculture are contextual, contested and dynamic. Whilst the executive body at COCA enjoyed a great degree of consensus, I described ethical fault-lines at Hazlehurst concerning governance and permaculture:

I found it extremely painful when we were talking about this when the growing season we could've been doing stuff on the land and we were stuck in meetings

Richard, Hazlehurst

My comparative case studies illustrated the hybridity of the CSA model and I showed how CSAs adopt a range of *instrumental*, *collaborative* and *functional* approaches (Feagan and Henderson, 2009). Balazs et al. claim that 'each successful CSA project reflects the needs, talents, and resources of its farm and community without a one-size-fits-all prescription to sustainability' (2016:102) whilst White and Stirling state that 'CSA schemes are a huge source of innovative diversity' (2013:845). These variations may be considered a strength of Community Supported Agriculture as it allows pioneer groups to shape individual CSAs to the circumstances that they are situated within, and to react to changing conditions over time.

However, as many authors note, some of these new configurations align principally with 'commodification and depoliticization' (Busa and Garder, 2015:324), blunting the transformative potential of Community Supported Agriculture (Goland, 2002). Both my case studies accommodated subscriber preferences in order to retain membership, thereby compromising their founding ideals. Consequently, my research illustrates that, aside from being counter to mainstream consumer expectations, CSAs are also complex and ambiguous moral constructions. Notwithstanding these tensions, as my case studies demonstrate, the flexibility of the model allows for replication in different circumstances.

A recent study from California identified how CSAs are increasingly operated by farmers without executive bodies who have no expectation of community participation, nor substantially share the risk of production with their members (Galt et al., 2011). I described how this trend has been depicted as '*the changing face of CSA*' (Lang, 2010a, my italics). My case study

research suggests that CSAs in the UK are adopting the same trajectory as North American CSAs, but in a compressed and accelerated time-frame. Seyfang and Haxeltine argue that ‘as niche practices diffuse into wider society, they always evolve and change, losing some of the aspects that originally made them innovative and appealing to early pioneers, and gaining other characteristics that make them attractive and accessible to wider audiences’ (2012:389). However, the movement in North America is significantly more mature, having started approximately 10 years earlier and grown larger in scale than the UK movement by a factor of 100.

The UK trend may be accounted for by the substantially different political economy, or macrolevel *landscape*, that CSAs now reside within compared to the countercultural foment in North America described by Warren Belasco (1989). Furthermore, the ‘conventionalisation’ of organic produce that has occurred since the inception of the North American movement may now position Community Supported Agriculture as merely a niche product or life-style choice, as opposed to a progressive form of resistance to unsustainable food systems (Andreatta et al., 2008). Finally, the historic predominance of organic veg-box schemes in Europe (Haldrup, 2004) may also explain why UK CSAs are apparently assuming *instrumental* values and practices at a faster rate than their North American predecessors.

In Chapter 6 I described how both my case studies were financially unstable and precarious. Although each CSA remained operational, their financial viability was fragile, circumstantial, and temporary: ‘isnt this a time to tell the members the economic reality?’ (p.182). Brunori et al. argue that CSAs are ‘radical breakouts from existing rules and norms... and struggle to face a multiplicity of problems emerging from the radicality of the innovation they pursue’ (2011:50). Hazlehurst and COCA both faced challenges to attract and retain a viable scale of membership:

we sent out four hundred emails straightaway at the touch of a button,
absolutely no response

Keith, Hazlehurst

steadily our members have gone up but nowhere near at the rate that we
wanted

Maddy, COCA

Building on the findings in my two previous empirical chapters, I argued that the limited extent and composition of the CSA communities resulted in a lack of capacity on and off the field. I demonstrated that a lack of human capital and an over-reliance on volunteer labour contributed to a deficiency in organisational capacity that hindered the development of each CSA: ‘if people don’t do the jobs the thing falls apart’

(p.183). In addition, I described limitations in the growing capacity at my case studies that resulted in poor quality veg-shares and further endangered the viability of each scheme:

We have got to, we have got to look more professional, we have got to supply a service and we've got to maintain that service, I think, for it to work

Annie, COCA

I also illustrated how the moral economy of CSA places obligations on CSA members that can be characterised as forms of sacrifice. These sacrifices manifested as volunteering time, labour and skills for those who assisted in the execution of the schemes, and forfeiting vegetable choice, quality and quantity for those who subscribed to the veg-shares:

I'm a bit sick of courgettes [laughs]

Cheryl, Hazlehurst

However, my research illustrated how, to a limited extent, Hazlehurst and COCA mitigated unfavourable financial circumstances by performing 'diverse economies' (Gibson-Graham, 1996). This included practices such as offering workshares, operating a food co-op and gifting surplus produce. COCA further diversified its economy by hosting Wwoofers as a supplementary source of labour. Therefore, although my case studies struggled to achieve viability, my study revealed how Hazlehurst and COCA both challenged the use of currency as the sole means of exchange in local food economies.

In summary, empirically I argued that Community Supported Agriculture depends on different forms of social capital for its successful operation. However, I claimed that it is a capricious and limited resource that simultaneously benefits and restricts individual CSA schemes. I also illustrated the narrow social composition of Hazlehurst and COCA. By contrast, I described how the community at my case studies was reproduced at multiple scales from the local to the global through networks of linking capital.

I demonstrated how members interact with CSAs along a spectrum of commitment and how the transformative potential of CSA is restrained by individuals who adopt instrumental approaches to their membership. I described how the ethics of a CSA scheme is contextual, contested and dynamic, depending on the social and human capital of the executive body. I outlined how the model of CSA has diverged according to a range of ethical approaches and I described how both my case studies embraced instrumental positions to retain and expand membership. However, I claimed that the flexibility of the model allows it to be replicated in disparate situations. My

research suggests that CSAs are becoming more instrumental at a faster rate compared to a similar trajectory that was previously experienced in North America.

I described how my case studies had a deficiency in capacity in terms of administrative and horticultural skills and an over-dependence on volunteer labour. I claimed that, to some extent, the shortfall in capacity was met by performing diverse economies.

7.4.3

Conceptual findings

In this section I discuss concepts that arose from my research. I describe how many aspects of Community Supported Agriculture entail sacrifice, on behalf of producers and consumers; I claim that CSA does not constitute a challenge to the dominant neo-liberal political economy, including monetary exchange; and that CSA can be theorised as a multi-scalar niche innovation.

As I mentioned previously in my empirical findings, sacrifice was a major conceptual outcome of my fieldwork. I had personal experience of gifting my time and skills extensively during my tenure as Treasurer of COCA. Reflecting on my research role as an ‘observer as participant’ and the accounts of other interviewees, sacrifice became a dominant theme across different empirical settings. For example, the farmer at COCA gifted his own time in addition to providing farm equipment and subsidising the land rent: ‘Gareth’s working for nothing’ (p.227). At Hazlehurst a member of the Management Committee used his holiday allowance to assist with cultivation and administration: ‘I took three weeks off of work for a vacation, just to do CSA stuff’ (p.232). I described how another member of Hazlehurst sacrificed the quality of her own veg-share for other members: ‘I’m really concerned that people get good quality’ (p.227). At COCA a member of the Core Group volunteered to raise his subscription to reflect the true cost of production: ‘I’ve increased my monthly food share payment to £50’ (p.231). I described how other subscribers internalised the risks of production by accepting veg-shares of variable quality and quantity at different times of the year, including the ‘hungry gap’. I maintained that these varied forms of gifting and accommodation can be considered as acts of sacrifice.

In North America, Press and Arnould have theorised Community Supported Agriculture as an evocation of American pastoral values (2011); they argue that the movement has grown in popularity because of its strong association with the history of American settlement and the potent agrarian idyll of pastoralism. Other authors have conceptualised Community Supported Agriculture as a form of caring, for each other; for the environment; and for future generations (Wells and Gradwell 1999). Lucy Jarosz argues that female farmers nourish themselves and others through the caring practice of CSA. However, my research demonstrates that the idyll of

CSA and its attendant ethics of caring are achieved through significant levels of sacrifice on behalf of CSA producers and consumers. As I argued earlier, the concept of CSA runs strongly counter to mainstream consumer expectations. In tandem with the necessity for acts of sacrifice, Community Supported Agriculture in its present form, therefore, will most likely remain a niche component of local food systems in the UK.

Following Galt (2013) I adopt a political economy perspective to make my second conceptual claim: although CSAs are embedded within a moral economy of reciprocal trust and care, they do not confront existing hegemonic regimes because they rely predominantly on monetary transactions. Hinrichs describes Community Supported Agriculture as ‘a “softened” form of exchange’ (2000:301) but Galt states that ‘CSAs do not necessarily challenge a belief in the market as the prime organizing principle for society’ (2011:134). At Hazlehurst and COCA the majority of transactions concerning veg-shares were still mediated through the conventional channel of monetary exchange and members were conditioned to receiving value for money:

if I was doing it sort of financially, purely financially, I probably wouldn't go for a Hazlehurst bag

Cheryl, Hazlehurst

it is a bit like money down the drain and I'm doing it because I believe in the concept

Annie, COCA

In North America Alkon et al. studied participation in AFNs in five separate locations; they conclude that ‘low-income people are restricted not so much by geography, but by price’ (2013:133). My case study CSAs were also sensitive to the effect of pricing:

I think, unfortunately, you have to make it really easy for people, don't you, um, and cost is obviously a fundamental problem

Debbie, COCA

In Chapter 6 I argued that Hazlehurst and COCA attempted to ease the financial barrier of veg-share prices by practising ‘diverse economies’. Diversification undoubtedly contributed to the resilience of each scheme by, for example, substituting workshares for wages. Payment in veg-shares for urgently needed assistance with cultivation allowed the CSAs to reduce their financial commitment and maintain their viability. However, unless subscribers were able to gift their time in lieu of payment, workshares for the majority of members were an inefficient, or impractical, means of access to a veg-share.

Consequently, Follett claims that ‘we may find that underrepresented members of society, such as the poor, do not benefit any more from the alternative food system than they do in the current conventional food system’ (2009:49). Watts et al. have described AFNs as *weaker* or *stronger*, according to their transformative potential that can include food access (2005). Gunderson has argued that CSA veg-shares can be considered as another form of commodity which trades on fetishized credentials such as ‘local’, ‘organic’ and ‘sustainable’ (2014); he argues that “‘(d)oining something,’” such as buying organic cabbage, may function as a deceptive, recuperative, and ineffective stand-in’ acting as a substitute for more substantive and socially just socio-technical regime change (ibid:116).

Although Hazlehurst and COCA attempted to provide veg-shares through mechanisms that circumvented the premium of cost, I maintain that Community Supported Agriculture, as it was predominantly practised at my case studies, can be considered a *weaker* form of AFN. One of my interviewees expressed her financial relationship to the moral economy of CSA:

You kind of pay for your convictions, don't you?

Becky, Hazlehurst

My fieldwork suggests that Community Supported Agriculture in the UK does not appeal to a broad constituency of members who are either able, or prepared, to pay the perceived price premium of a CSA veg-share. In North America where the movement is more advanced, the process of promoting inclusiveness is more developed. A range of strategies have been adopted such as offering veg-shares on sliding scales of payment (Forbes and Harmon, 2008; Hudson, 2005) and providing subsidised veg-shares (Hinrichs and Kremer, 2002). In addition, some CSAs negotiate their veg-share prices at the beginning of the growing season according to ability to pay; members on higher incomes effectively subsidise those who are less economically advantaged, the gross income reflecting a fair wage for the grower and the associated costs of operating the CSA (Henderson and Van En, 2007; Kittredge, 1996; Lamb, 1994). If Community Supported Agriculture is to contribute to socio-technical transitions in the UK it will be necessary for individual schemes to develop further strategies to make veg-shares more widely attainable to individuals on low incomes.

My final conceptual finding relates to scale. I have previously cited how CSAs are characteristic of the ‘turn to the local’ (Feagan, 2007) and that ‘CSAs are local in the most essential sense’ (Lapping, 2004:145). However, a key conceptual finding from my research was the ‘*multi-scalar* approach’ (Wald and Hill, 2016) of my case studies. In Chapter 4 I described how Hazlehurst and COCA developed and participated in CSA networks that spanned local, national and global scales. I discussed how these networks simultaneously supported the individual

schemes in particular, and promoted the movement in general. I also depicted other extended communities of interest including food sovereignty and organic cultivation. Therefore, I depicted Hazlehurst and COCA as ‘Global Localists’ (Long and Murray, 2003) to indicate how these local initiatives participated in global networks.

For example, I illustrated how Hazlehurst created global links with La Via Campesina through its membership of the UK-based Land Workers’ Alliance and how it facilitated *bonding* and *linking* social capital through solidarity and knowledge transfer with developing world NGOs such as Savisthri in Sri Lanka and BHASO in Zimbabwe. Press and Arnould have highlighted the importance of the internet as a means of interface for CSAs citing its ‘lessened asymmetry of power’ and ‘more democratic modes of communication, which reinforce the egalitarian principle and the perception of shared community’ (2011:186). I also depicted how networks of Community Supported Agriculture are being created in the UK; I described the knowledge transfer between COCA and Stroud Community Agriculture, the recent inception of the CSA Network UK, and the role of the Soil Association in promoting the growth of the UK movement.

Sonnino claims that networked communities of interest comprise ‘a more integrated vision of a local space where urban and rural areas and actors are connected in *a web of synergistic relationships*’ (2016:197, my italics). Furthermore, Chatterton has argued that local sustainability initiatives can contribute to ‘a more diffuse and networked spatiality, where non-contiguous projects, ideas and people are strongly connected (to) create islands of post-capitalist commons’ (2016:9). Wald and Hill have referred to La Via Campesina as an ‘(i)ntitutional assemblage of networks’ at different scales (2016:207). By acting as partners in CSA Network UK or the Land Workers’ Alliance, Hazlehurst and COCA benefitted from, and contributed to, the network assemblage of Community Supported Agriculture and its allied partners. Therefore, CSA is simultaneously networked and place-based, extended and embedded, global and local. My case studies demonstrate that the *multi-scalar* dimension of Community Supported Agriculture is a strength of individual CSA initiatives and the CSA movement in the UK, and the range of scales contributes to its transformative potential.

Conceptually, I have outlined how I identified sacrifice as a key element of my case studies; I argued that key individuals who have a strong commitment to participation as members of the executive body and, or, assisting with cultivation extend themselves to a degree that be conceived of as a form of sacrifice. I also described how members who receive a veg-share need to sacrifice conventional standards of choice, convenience and cost.

I then argued that Community Supported Agriculture reinforces the hegemonic, neo-liberal, political economy by (re-)producing a commodity that is predominantly exchanged by conventional means of currency, thereby blunting its transformational potential. I maintained that, for the majority of subscribers, CSA does not challenge price as the principle governing the value of a CSA veg-share.

Finally I claimed that CSA can be conceived of as a multi-scale grassroots innovation. I described my case studies as simultaneously embedded and extended, local and global, comprising a form of micro-politics that engages in networked macro-movements. I described how Hazlehurst and COCA contributed to, and benefitted from, participation in social movements at differing spatial scales.

I now consider how my research may have practical application to other CSA schemes, and the Community Supported Agriculture movement in the UK.

7.4.4

Practical findings

Ryan Galt has stated that ‘creating better understandings of CSA can serve the movement in many ways, including improving activist strategies to expand CSAs’ (2011:135). My research has value because it contributes to a very small corpus of research concerning Community Supported Agriculture in the UK. In Chapter 3 I described my ‘observer as participant’ approach to ethnographic research. My methodology was immersive and extensive with the intention to construct knowledge that details CSA practice and promotes knowledge of the CSA movement in the UK. In this final results section I consider how my findings may inform CSA practice and policy in the UK.

My first practical finding is that Community Supported Agriculture is slowly developing in the UK, although the scale of activity remains narrow. Despite difficulties that I outlined such as limited community and constrained capacity, both my case studies illustrate that Community Supported Agriculture can contribute to localised food systems which offer an alternative to unsustainable, mainstream food provisioning. Stock et al. argue that ‘doing food differently is an often messy and always indeterminate *process*’ (2015:221, original italics). Hazlehurst and COCA undoubtedly experienced obstacles and problems but both CSAs can be considered ‘part of a collective effort of providing the air needed for other experiments to breath’ (Tornaghi and Van Dyck, 2015:1261). Community Supported Agriculture in its current configuration does not have wide appeal due to its countervailing consumer ethics and praxis. However, it comprises a socio-technical niche template that has the potential to evolve and develop into more successful iterations. Stock et al. claim that ‘(w)hile we should not blindly persist in such activities, we

should be open to the partial successes that can be retained as we adjust our practices in pursuit of an ideal' (2015:220). Sage has referred to 'archipelagoes' of a more sustainable agri-food economy' (2014:17); Hazlehurst and COCA can be conceived of as part of an ongoing, contingent and incomplete process of reconfiguring food supply systems in the UK.

Secondly, my research reinforces previous studies which claim that CSAs with executive bodies attached to existing farms are more financially resilient (Lass et al., 2003; 2005; Lizio and Lass, 2005). The grower at Hazlehurst also believed that farm-based CSAs have benefits:

(T)he CSAs in France, the AMAPS, most of them have come out of established farms

Bob, Hazlehurst

In Chapter 5 I discussed how COCA enjoyed more consensus in its pioneer phase and quickly progressed to cultivation using veg-share subscriptions that were pledged months in advance of the first harvest. COCA also benefitted greatly from the existing farm resources such as equipment, labour and land, although, as I detailed in Chapter 6, the extant farming skills did not align precisely with the varied growing demands of Community Supported Agriculture. There were also problems related to encouraging members to volunteer on the farm because of its remoteness. Conversely, because COCA was situated on a farm, unlike Hazlehurst it was able to host Wwoofers who provided an important source of labour that contributed significantly to the viability of the scheme. I also described how the Core Group complemented the farming skills by bringing a range of additional social capital to the venture:

If Gareth didn't have everyone supporting him it wouldn't be, it wouldn't have made it as a farmer-led CSA because Gareth's wouldn't have had the skills

Ben, COCA

Although COCA's membership size was similar to Hazlehurst's, COCA extended its geographical range by implementing two *remote hubs*. I argued that this expansion was born of financial necessity but, arguably, it illustrated how COCA was more adaptive than Hazlehurst and demonstrated its potential to continue growing. Therefore, although my research is confined to two comparative case studies, it suggests that CSA operations attached to existing farms may enjoy greater future success in the UK.

A further practical finding relates to awareness of CSAs in the UK. In Chapter 4 I discussed that Community Supported Agriculture is an unfamiliar concept in the UK (Soil Association, 2011a) and how even members of my case studies had hitherto been unaware of it: 'I had no idea of what it was about' (p.123). Despite the relative size of the movement, there is also low

awareness of Community Supported Agriculture in North America: ‘the CSA model of food marketing is a relatively new concept, with many consumers still unaware of what a CSA is and how it operates’ (Forbes and Harmon, 2007:76). I described how most members at my case studies enrolled through word-of-mouth: ‘we go to Spanish class together...’ (p.122), and how these existing social networks reinforced the homogeneity of the CSA communities.

Therefore, a major task for CSA schemes and the movement in the UK is to raise the public profile of Community Supported Agriculture to enlist a broader community of subscribers. Schnell has argued that CSA is capable of attracting members beyond its present liberal constituency ‘because many issues relating to the establishment of local economies resonate with people across the political spectrum’ (2007:558). As I argued earlier, CSAs need to transcend class barriers too and literature in North America has also featured race as an exclusionary factor in local food systems (Guthman, 2008a, Slocum, 2007). The Soil Association (2012) has published material to assist CSAs in their marketing efforts but there is a further need for external organisations to raise awareness. For example, the National Trust publicised efforts that it has made to initiate CSAs on its own properties (Schrieber, 2012). As I mentioned earlier, the function of the internet will also assume greater importance; according to Westley et al., ‘(s)ocial media and associated advances in information and communication technologies can play a significant role in providing platforms for the stimulation and integration of the ideas as well as mobilizing collective action’ (2011:776).

Finally, my last practical finding concerns the institutional landscape of Community Supported Agriculture in the UK: for the movement to expand beyond its niche status, state policy needs to be more supportive in promoting Community Supported Agriculture. Hazlehurst and COCA both received assistance from NGOs to initiate their schemes but the support was piecemeal and depended on funding sources that have largely expired. The funding they received derived indirectly from the state, for example in the form of the National Lottery or National Park Authority grants. Neither CSA received direct guidance nor subsidies from the state, in contrast to the funding structure of conventional agriculture. Earlier in this chapter I related how Tony Little of CSA Network UK claimed that Community Supported Agriculture has been ‘comprehensively and consistently ignored’ in policy circles (2015). In particular, financial assistance with training and knowledge transfer would aid replication of CSA schemes in the UK.

Previously I discussed how European countries such as France encourage Community Supported Agriculture through a raft of strategies including funding initiatives (European CSA Research Group, 2016). Blay-Palmer et al. have argued that ‘facilitative policy, programmes and regulations are needed at all scales of government from the local to the global’ (2013:525).

In addition, Sonnino and Griggs-Trevarthen claim that '(n)ew funding and networking mechanisms are needed to incorporate social enterprises into a coherent system that consolidates these clusters of innovation' (2013:288). As a corollary, Kirwan et al. have observed that local food systems, including CSAs, need to coalesce into coherent and recognisable movements because policy-makers are 'more likely to identify them as a strategic niche that is worthy of ongoing support and encouragement' (2013:837). For example, in Chapter 4 I described how the Soil Association has helped to establish the formal CSA Network UK that acts as a focal point for CSAs in the UK. NGOs such as CSA Network UK and Organic Centre Wales and will have an important function in raising the profile of, and campaigning on behalf of, Community Supported Agriculture in the UK. Marsden and Franklin state that 'we can conceive of alternative food movements, and especially when they begin to converge, becoming major social and political vehicles for embedding and creating the means of transitions to the post-neoliberal eco-economy' (2013:640). Hazlehurst and COCA both participated in extended networks of CSA that raised their visibility but my research suggests that a shift in the policy landscape will also be required before CSA in the UK can substantially contribute to a socio-technical transition.

In this final section concerning my practical research findings, I claimed that Hazlehurst and COCA, notwithstanding obstacles and challenges, are making a contribution to reconfigured local food systems. The process is slow, fragmentary, and ongoing but my research demonstrates that CSA is a valuable, albeit under-developed, component of the AFN landscape in the UK.

Secondly, although I draw on just two comparative case studies, my fieldwork suggests that CSAs attached to farms may be more resilient; they can optimise use of existing farm infrastructure and, unlike bare field sites, can take advantage of hosting wwoofers to increase the availability of labour in the field.

My research confirms that Community Supported Agriculture is an unfamiliar concept in the UK, even amongst those who participate. Enrolment in CSA schemes is largely through word-of-mouth and social networks, although it is likely that the internet will play a more active role in member recruitment in the future.

Finally, CSA in the UK currently operates to a very great degree in a policy vacuum, despite some piecemeal strategies to promote the concept. Community Supported Agriculture would benefit from greater institutional support, akin to the assistance that conventional agriculture receives. Training and knowledge transfer are two areas that could improve replication of

schemes across the UK. NGOs including CSA Network UK will also assume more importance as they establish and promote CSA as a more coherent and recognisable social movement.

7.4.5

Conclusions of findings

In this section of the chapter I have summarised my main research findings according to their *empirical, conceptual* and *practical* significance. Franklin and Marsden have referred to ‘playing the role of “critical friend”’ to case studies that they engage with (2015:945) and Galt states that ‘(c)ritical geographers, as academics and citizens, should be proactive in supporting these progressive producer-consumer relationships... while at the same time *remaining aware of shortcomings*’ (2011:135, my italics). In this context, I have presented positive aspects of my case studies as well as the challenges confronted by Hazlehurst, COCA, and the Community Supported Agriculture movement in the UK.

Empirically, I discussed how my case studies were dependent on finite social capital and how the potential of my case studies was constrained by their limited social composition. However, I demonstrated how the community of CSA initiatives extends spatially from the local to the global. I argued that the ethics and praxis of Community Supported Agriculture are countervailing to dominant consumer expectations and that the moral economy of CSA is contested, contextual and dynamic. I claimed that Community Supported Agriculture in the UK is relinquishing its collaborative ideals at an accelerated rate compared to North America. I discussed how my case studies were financially precarious and vulnerable to a lack of capacity on and off the field of cultivation. I explained how Hazlehurst and COCA mitigated some of these effects by performing ‘diverse economies’.

Conceptually, I stated that sacrifice was integral to producers *and* consumers for the practice of Community Supported Agriculture at my case studies. Although I previously described the ‘diverse economies’ of my case studies, I then argued that CSA does not challenge existing socio-technical regimes because it reinforces monetary currency as the chief form of exchange. I argued that Community Supported Agriculture can be conceived of as multi-scalar because Hazlehurst and COCA both bridged spatial scales.

Practically, I contended that my case studies were indicative of fragile spaces of experimentation that, potentially, can contribute to socio-technical transitions. I also argued that my research suggests that CSAs attached to farms may be more resilient and successful. I stated that awareness of CSAs in the UK is low and hinders development, in tandem with their absence from the policy landscape of the UK.

In the following section I discuss how my research findings relate to and enrich three distinct literatures that I previously referred to in Chapter 2.

Contribution

7.5.1

In the following section I discuss how my research contributes to academic literature concerning *Alternative Food Networks*; *Community Supported Agriculture*; and *Socio-technical transitions* and *Grassroots Innovations*. I describe how my study is positioned within broad debates concerning Alternative Food Networks; how it contributes to studies specifically relating to Community Supported Agriculture; and how it informs and extends knowledge of socio-technical transitions and grassroots innovations.

7.5.2

Alternative Food Networks

David Goodman has contrasted European and North American AFNs (2003); he characterises European AFNs as part of the ‘quality turn’ whereby food is attributed with added value and distinction through schemes that define the provenance of specialist food products such as wine and cheese. Goodman argues that European AFNs reflect trends in agricultural restructuring that do not challenge underlying unsustainable structures and practices. Conversely, he portrays AFNs in North America as a grassroots social movement of resistance to globalised agri-food. Furthermore, Watts et al. have argued that AFNs can be classified as *weaker* or *stronger* according to their ability to reconfigure existing food regimes (2005:34). However, as I argued in Chapter 2, Goodman’s binary categorisation of AFNs is overly simplistic and Watts et al.’s duality masks and belies the subtleties and complexity of AFN phenomena.

My research confirms the contradictions and dichotomies inherent in Community Supported Agriculture. In Chapter 4 I demonstrated how each of my case studies constituted and created extended networks of CSA community that indicated potential for transformational change. However, I also illustrated the insularity of my case study communities that reproduced themselves largely through word-of-mouth and operated predominantly using traditional price mechanisms that deter and exclude those on low incomes. In Chapter 5 I described the progressive ethical foundations of CSA yet I depicted compromises as my case studies sought to accommodate the consumer-orientated expectations of their members. In Chapter 6 I described how the resilience of CSA projects is challenged by their dependency on predominantly unskilled volunteer labour. I demonstrated how members are obliged to internalise the risks of production by gifting their labour and accepting veg-shares of variable standards. Therefore each of my case studies comprised aspects that were simultaneously progressive and reactionary; weaker and stronger;

radical and conservative. Henderson and Van En have described CSA as ‘like one thousand farmer controlled experiment stations... busy with research on the social and economic relations of the future’ (2007:280). My research affirms that both of my case studies represent ongoing AFN experiments which continuously negotiate and reproduce these competing tensions and complexity. Feagan and Henderson have observed ‘that CSA is rarely static’ (2009:216).

Allen and Wilson maintain that ‘(b)ecause our relationship with food is one of the ‘closest-in’, consumption provides a place, a site of unmapped possibilities present within every situation, with *immanent transformative potential* to cultivate new subjectivities and the cultural alternatives to neo-liberal hegemony’ (2008:538, my italics). My research substantiates claims for Community Supported Agriculture as a conduit of personal and collective transformation. Levkoe refers to ‘a transformative food politics (that) uses food as an entry point to address a much broader range of issues and to work towards social change’ (2011:700); in Chapter 6 I depicted a ‘graduation effect’ of behaviour as committed members adapted to the ethics and practices of Community Supported Agriculture. Feagan and Henderson claim that ‘evidence of adaptation and situated learning... speak(s) to the *pragmatic yet transformative potential* of CSA’ (2009:203, my italics). Each of my case studies comprised individuals who were learning to re-frame their approach to food practices. Ostrom contends that ‘(m)any participants in the movement are convinced that by reorienting their everyday habits and lifestyles in accordance with their values they can effect change at a wider level’ (2007:117). Becky at Hazlehurst typified this approach: ‘it’s the right thing to do, so in a very small way, it’s ethically correct, it makes you feel like you’re doing something to contribute’ (p.103).

Psarikidou and Szerszynski observe that AFNs such as CSAs struggle to achieve financial viability; ‘(h)owever, viewed as part of an economy that is re-embedded in social life, these initiatives achieve *a different kind of sustainability* due to their role in the reproduction of social life itself’ (2012a:36, my italics). In Chapter 4 I described how my case studies comprised a sociality of gatherings and events that stimulated bonding and bridging social capital within and beyond the community of CSA members. Goodman and Dupuis state that ‘this movement can be seen as bearing the seeds of a political struggle to re-define consumer-producer relationships’ (2002:17); in Chapter 5 I described the relationships of mutuality, trust and partnership that undergird my case studies. DeLind contends ‘that CSA members are politically aware, environmentally-active and health conscious and that by belonging to a CSA, by supporting local food production, *they are engaged in social resistance*’ (1999:7, my italics). In Chapter 4 I illustrated how these counter-cultural AFN values were shared with other communities across different spatial scales. However, I also depicted varying degrees of personal political engagement in the schemes: ‘Well, I wouldn’t say I know much about it’ (p.102). Therefore,

CSA members traverse a spectrum of commitment to AFNs with varying degrees of participation.

7.5.3

Community Supported Agriculture

CSAs are a comparatively new concept in food growing and display the potential to grow in size and expand in scope. Although a well established movement in North America, CSAs are still an under-developed component of the agricultural landscape in the UK. Unlike conventional organic veg-box schemes, they allow different degrees of mediation between growers and consumers; a subscriber can choose to participate in vegetable cultivation or coordination of the scheme, or they can merely opt to receive a weekly veg-share. Furthermore, CSAs demonstrate a reconfiguration of market relations through subscription and other means such as workshares that, thus far, have withstood commodification and cooption by capitalist interests. In particular, they embody principles and practices that have the potential to be replicated and reproduced, or ‘scaled up’ and ‘scaled out’, thereby addressing issues of sustainability in the UK food supply chain (Johnston and Baker, 2005; Mount, 2012).

My research contributes to a limited body of existing academic literature pertaining to CSA in the UK that currently comprises just five case studies (Charles, 2011; Cox et al., 2008; Holloway et al., 2007b; Ravenscroft et al., 2013; White and Stirling, 2013). However, Keech et al. (2009) produced a report on behalf of the Soil Association describing another seven CSAs, although there may be some duplication as the case studies were anonymised in this instance. This dearth of literature reflects scant research on CSA schemes and the relative infancy of the movement in the UK. Therefore my investigation of two additional CSA case studies is a significant contribution to the corpus of UK academic literature in this field. My contribution is further enriched and distinctive because my fieldwork was carried out in two contrasting rural and urban settings. However, as I described in the previous section of this chapter, despite their diverse and diametric circumstances, my case studies shared many similarities, such as issues of member retention and lack of organisational capacity.

Literature from the UK and North America regarding CSAs comprises qualitative and quantitative analysis. My research adds to the limited number of ethnographic studies of CSAs and has additional value in my role as an *observer as participant* (Dawson, 2010). My immersion as a participant observer lasted two years and consisted of membership of the executive bodies of both my case studies, including the role of Treasurer at COCA. Scott-Cato and Hillier maintain that ‘engaged academics’ including myself need to ‘balance the requirements of a credible and nuanced intellectual stance, a determination to inform and guide

the public debate and a close involvement in their own community's response to the environmental crisis' (2010:870). As I described in Chapter 3, I experienced a constant tension between '*being*' part of my case studies and '*doing*' my research competently and proficiently.

Other researchers have employed a more engaged methodological approach undertaking Participatory Action Research (PAR); DeLind (1999) has recounted her experience of establishing a CSA in North America and Charles (2011) participated in a similar study of a CSA in north-east England that she helped to initiate. Although my research concerned two schemes that were already established, I was active and influential in their early development, such as my participation on the Veg-Bag Marketing Sub-Group at Hazlehurst when I helped to introduce the distribution of veg-shares. Therefore my research provides a valuable and extensive insight into the quotidian workings and challenges of operating CSA schemes in the UK. I was also able to draw on my experiences of attending conferences and study visits in other parts of the UK and California to extend my ambit of investigation and analysis.

7.5.4

Socio-technical transitions and Grassroots Innovations

Following Rip and Kemp, in Chapter 2 I argued that CSAs can be positioned as a form socio-technical *niche* that has the potential to effect a transition to a more sustainable *regime* (1998). However, I critiqued this multi-level perspective (MLP) theory as an overly techno-centric model that neglects the community dimension of transitions. I advanced the more nuanced concept of *grassroots innovations* that depicts niches as *bottom-up* sustainability solutions (Seyfang and Smith, 2007). Grassroots innovations such as Community Supported Agriculture are initiated from within a community that coheres around a geographical space and, or, shared interest (Seyfang and Haxeltine, 2012). White and Stirling contend that '(c)ivil society is a critical arena for exploring trajectories towards Sustainability – through innovation, experimentation and debate' (2013:845) whilst Boyer claims that grassroots innovations 'create an ideological space for experimentation with alternative systems of production and consumption' (2015:320).

According to Hinrichs, 'recent sustainability transitions research has stressed that important sustainability innovations can be *social* rather than technological' (2014:147, my italics). Seyfang and Smith observe that grassroots innovations comprise changes in bottom-up *social* practices in contrast to top-down *technological* innovations that have hitherto dominated MLP literature (2007). There are only limited examples of researchers using transitions theory in the context of AFN research. For instance, Kirwan et al. (2013) used the analytical framework of sustainability transitions to interrogate how local food networks develop the capacity of

communities and Hinrichs suggests that it can be applied to food hubs ‘to consider how innovative food systems institutions emerge and interact over time with established systems to pull or be pushed along different sustainability pathways’ (2014:149). My research builds on this limited literature deploying transitions theory as a framework of analysis of Community Supported Agriculture. Following Seyfang and Smith, my thesis represents ‘new empirical work (that) is needed to map grassroots innovations in terms of their extent and nature, specific characteristics, impacts and outcomes’ (2006:16).

In this study I have previously argued that the potential of Community Supported Agriculture to effect transition to a more sustainable form of localised agriculture is circumscribed due to constraining factors such as the limited community of CSA, the countervailing moral economy of CSA, and the finite capacity of those that participate in key roles. Seyfang and Haxeltine have stated the potential of grassroots innovations will be informed by ‘an understanding of how identity, belonging, purpose, and sense of community underlie niche growth’ (2012:396). My research substantiates evidence that transition communities can be (self-)excluding and, as a consequence, stifle growth of the niche in terms of participation and scale. It also corroborates studies which indicate that grassroots innovations depend on a narrow base of social capital and that resources are predominantly, but not exclusively, devoted to self-maintenance of schemes as opposed to promoting the niche as a means of socio-technical transition (Seyfang and Smith, 2007).

Brunori et al. argue that CSAs in Italy are ‘in the novelty phase, with very radical visions and goals, and struggle to face a multiplicity of problems emerging from the radicality of the innovation they pursue’ (2011:50). In Chapter 4 I illustrated that Community Supported Agriculture was novel to the extent that even members of my case studies had previously been unaware of the concept. Furthermore, scholars such as Smith (2007) have argued that the radical-ness of a niche diminishes its fit with existing mainstream regimes. My research suggests that ‘the changing face of CSA’ previously observed in North America is occurring in a truncated and expedited form in the UK. Smith and Raven refer to niches that ‘fit and conform’ rather than ‘stretch and conform’ to extant socio-technical regimes (2012). Although the process of ‘adaptation and accommodation’ (Feagan and Henderson, 2009:206) that I described in Chapter 5 may position Community Supported Agriculture as a more ‘intermediate’ niche with potential to transition (Smith, 2007), fitting and conforming to a dominant regime blunts the progressive scope of the niche movement.

Hodson and Marvin claim that ‘(s)patial scale frequently remains implicit or underdeveloped in the MLP and transitions approaches generally’ (2010:480). Gibbs and O’Neill have argued that space and place are portrayed ‘as passive backdrops to the transition process’ that lacks a

geographical perspective (2014:201). Coenen et al., claim that this approach supports ‘the naïve notion that sustainability transition may take place anywhere’ (2012:976). My research confirms that ‘*geography matters*’ illustrating that the social and spatial relations of sustainability transitions are dialectically reproduced: ‘(t)he spatial is not just an outcome: it is part of the explanation’ (Massey, 1984). For example, COCA was able to receive funding from Organic Centre Wales whilst, in its foundation phase, Hazlehurst accessed support from the English-based Making Local Food Work programme. COCA and Hazlehurst developed in different ways at different paces because they had separate ‘place specificity’ (Gibbs and O’Neill, 2014) with varying conditions.

Coenen et al. hypothesise that certain localities, and their connections to broader networks, are more conducive to transitions; they refer to these transition hotspots as ‘global-local nodes’ that can ‘make substantial contributions to transition processes in particular localities’ (2012:976). Furthermore, it ‘allow(s) transitions to define its spatial dimensions based on the way actors themselves develop relationships over space’ (ibid). In Chapter 4 I described the extended spatial networks that were developed by each of my case studies which contributed to their resilience; Nicolosi and Feola have outlined ‘geographically extensive and intensive relations’ to depict how community-based low-carbon initiatives affect ‘change in *specific places* and in global terms through *translocal* interconnections’ (2016:153, my italics). Chatterton portrays this as ‘a more diffuse and networked spatiality, where non-contiguous projects, ideas and people are strongly connected through counter–topographical networks’ (2016:9). He argues that:

we depart from the idea of actually scaling up, and shift emphasis towards a networked micropolitics that can spread mimetically and virally through decentralised swarming, networking and infiltrating, countering and corroding the dominant regime as they connect

(ibid)

My research suggests that a networked scaling-out, or replication, of individual CSA initiatives is the most likely form of niche transition for Community Supported Agriculture in the UK. I argued that CSA schemes can support and enhance each other in their development as a grassroots movement by utilising networks of bonding and bridging capital. This study is an addition to transitions literature that emphasises the importance of embeddedness *and* broader networks in sustainable place-making (Nicolosi and Feola, 2016).

Lawhon and Murphy have criticised transitions literature for ‘(e)vading power relations’ (2012:363) but Hinrichs claims that ‘(r)esearch invoking transitions to sustainability encourages

us to think more about *vertical* and *horizontal* linkages and processes' (2014:153, my italics). I described earlier how Community Supported Agriculture in the UK is largely performed without reference to the institutional landscape; Scott-Cato and Hillier maintain that 'the perceived reality for social change innovators concerned about climate change is that they are on their own' (2010:879). Although I outlined how NGOs advised and funded both my case studies, my research demonstrates that the niche of Community Supported Agriculture lacks linking social capital to institutional support and an advantageous policy landscape, inhibiting its potential to contribute to transition. Chatterton argues that '(s)tatutory agencies have a role as intermediary enablers of institutional frameworks' although he cautions that 'ultimately this means devolving and relinquishing control' (2016:9). My research endorses the necessity to address the political economy of socio-technical transitions.

Chatterton has attempted to redefine socio-technical change by applying post-capitalist politics to transitions theory (2016). He posits 'a transition process less interested in *breakthrough* and more interested in *break out*' that renounces hegemonic, technologically-dependent, capitalist socio-technical regimes in favour of a more socially just and inclusive form of transition (ibid:9, my italics). As Scrinis has argued, a future transition to more sustainable and localised forms of agriculture is not inevitable: 'for there are other possible responses and future trajectories, such as a more radical shift to a biotechnologically and nanotechnologically engineered food supply geared towards the efficient production of cheap processed reconstituted foods' (2007:131). I discussed earlier how, although my case studies experimented in diverse economies as a means of promoting individual and collective resilience, both Hazlehurst and COCA were principally configured along conventional, economic relations of monetary exchange. Chatterton's post-capitalist theory of transition intersects with broader contemporary AFN debates concerning food sovereignty (Wald and Hill, 2016) that inform and challenge what kind of socio-technical transition is envisaged by, and for, whom. My research indicates that the community of CSA is presently exclusive and exclusionary, restricting its transformative potential to break out of the hegemonic political economy.

In the preceding sections of this chapter I have demonstrated how my research contributes to academic literature concerning *Alternative Food Networks*, *Community Supported Agriculture* and *Socio-technical transitions* and *Grassroots Innovations*. I argued that my research confirms the contradictory and contested status of AFNs. I maintained that Community Supported Agriculture is a means for individuals to express broad concerns regarding social, economic and environmental sustainability. However, my study indicates that CSA members participate across a wide spectrum of ideological commitment. I illustrated how this work makes a notable contribution to a small and exceptional body of academic research on Community Supported

Agriculture in the UK and I argued that my study has particular value as in-depth, extended, ethnographic enquiry.

I argued that my research contributes to a small body of research on the social aspects of socio-technical transitions, particularly in the field of AFN scholarship and I demonstrated how my case studies informed research on the spatial dimensions of sustainability transitions. My study corroborates findings on the exclusivity of transitions communities, the fragile resource base that they depend on, and the limited capacity of participants to promote the niche as a form of transition. I claimed that Community Supported Agriculture appears to be evolving into a more 'intermediate' niche that is compromising the progressive tenets of the movement. However, I argued that this may align Community Supported Agriculture more accurately to statutory and institutional bodies that have the potential to accelerate transition, albeit in a modified and moderated form. Finally, I maintained that a future socio-technical transition such as Community Supported Agriculture which reproduces dominant capitalist relations may be socially divisive.

7.6.1

Limitations of my data

In this section of the chapter I consider the limitations of my research methodology and methods in terms of addressing my main research question. I organise the section into two segments: the limitations of my data, and the limitations of the scope of this study.

In this thesis I sought to investigate the transformative potential of Community Supported Agriculture to promote *resilience* and contribute to *transition* in the UK. However, there were limitations to my methodology and methods that impinged on my ability to address this central research question. In particular I confined my data collection to qualitative sources. My interpretation could have been enriched by supplementing quantitative data to facilitate triangulation with my personal observations and interviewees' transcripts. For example, Galt et al. used a survey in conjunction with interviews in their study of CSAs in California; the authors claim that 'detailed analysis of CSA from a research approach that integrates qualitative and quantitative social science methods has been rare' (2011:2). Also in California, Guthman et al. employed questionnaires which 'included short answer, multiple choice, and Likert scale questions' (2006:665). In rural Columbia County, New York Polimeni et al. (2006a&b) used survey data to economically model the supply and demand of Community Supported Agriculture.

Secondly, my study lacks empirical data concerning the demography of those who participated, although I profiled the membership community in general. Many studies in North America have used demographic and attitudinal data to interrogate the composition and motivations of CSA

members such as Brehm and Eisenhauer who used ‘a five-point Likert-type scale, asking respondents to rate their level of agreement with each motivation statement from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5)’ (2008:100). Hinrichs and Kremer conducted a semi-structured telephone survey of CSA members in the Midwest of North America to assess social inclusion in the scheme (2002). The type of quantitative data elicited from these studies would have been helpful to assess the transformational potential of Community Supported Agriculture in the UK.

Lastly, it would also have been possible to collect other forms of qualitative data. In North Carolina Andreatta et al. (2008) asked members of low-income households to keep a food journal recounting their experience of receiving a CSA veg-share. I previously described how I observed the ‘graduation effect’ of CSA members’ food practices. An extended food journal could have provided a richer and more nuanced description of how members adapted to the ethics and practices of Community Supported Agriculture. As a corollary, I could also have collected more in-depth qualitative data by conducting focus groups at my two case studies. For example, Zepeda et al. in Madison, Wisconsin used focus groups ‘to examine whether psychological benefits are related to continuing CSA membership’ (2013:612).

7.6.2

Limitations of the scope of this study

The scope of this study is limited to two contrasting case studies that are respectively urban and rural, community and farmer-led, although in Chapter 3 I related how this latter typology was challenged by some members of COCA. In terms of age and scale, my case studies were very similar both having been established for approximately three years at the beginning of my research, and consisting of between 30-40 members for the period of my ethnographic study. Therefore the findings of this research are restricted to these two particular and discrete settings that can only furnish ‘moderatum generalisations’ (Williams, 2002). However, in Chapter 4 I was able to relate my case studies to other CSAs in extended networks of Community Supported Agriculture.

Marsden and Franklin refer to ‘falling into the conceptual “local trap” of focusing only on the inevitable and infinitesimal heterogeneity, embeddedness and hybridity of alternative re-localised food movements’, such as the particularity of my case studies. (2013:637). Venn et al. maintain that ‘such cases only partially reveal the nature of the sector through the context-specific lenses (and) details regarding the broader sector and scope of such networks remain opaque’ (2006:256). Marcus proposes a ‘multi-site ethnography’ that focuses on ‘following connections, associations, and putative relationships’ (2006:97); the focus of an ethnographic study is led from an initial point of entry through ‘chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or

juxtapositions of locations' (ibid:105). For example, Galt et al. conducted a study of 74 CSAs in the Central Valley of California using interviews and a survey to collect data (2011). Therefore, in terms of addressing Community Supported Agriculture as a social movement with transformative potential, additional and more varied case studies would have assisted and triangulated my observations and results.

A further dimension of the scope of this study concerns the temporal framing of this research. The UK had been in economic recession since 2008 and, necessarily, it was impossible to filter the effects of this financial downturn on the potential of Community Supported Agriculture during the specific period of my fieldwork from 2012-13. However, Sonnino and Griggs-Trevarthen examined five community food enterprises contemporaneously in Oxfordshire and discerned no influence from the recession; they observe that the small businesses were 'financially and socially self sustaining' and 'resilient from external influences' which they attribute to the social embeddedness of the projects (2013:286). I described in Chapter 4 how my case studies were embedded in specific communities that were largely created through close ties of *bonding* social capital. Therefore, it may be reasonable to posit that the two CSAs I studied may also have been insulated from the recession due to their specific, place-based, moral economies. It is also possible that my case studies may have been more financially resilient in the absence of an economic recession. Conversely, Galt et al. ascribe a loss in membership numbers in CSAs in North America to the economic downturn that took place in that country from 2008 to 2009 (2011).

At the outset of my research I intended to interview non-members and past members of each case study. I was partially successful in speaking to lapsed members but these were restricted to individuals who had served on the executive bodies of the CSAs; I was unsuccessful in interviewing ex-subscribers in either setting. I had also hoped to speak to close associates of the CSAs who were non-members to establish their reasons for not participating; I characterised these attendant individuals as 'a population poised for behavior change' (Russell and Zepeda, 2008:145). In addition I hoped to interview individuals who resided in the adjoining neighbourhoods that were under or un-represented at my case studies. However, due to time constraints and the challenges of managing two case studies in distant locations, I did not pursue potential interviewees in these categories. In Chapter 3 I discussed the problems of research participants self-selecting, thereby influencing the quality of the data that I collected. In the context of AFNs, Tregear has recommended '(t)he conscious gathering of data from sources which might question a prevailing narrative' to counter this tendency (2011:11). My research would benefit from a greater plurality of voices to broaden the spectrum of behaviour and

opinions that I encountered and, therefore, strengthen my analysis of the potential of Community Supported Agriculture as an agent of change.

In addition, I would engage in recording and analysing my data in NVivo software at an earlier stage in my research. I would also use NVivo more actively to store and organise relevant literature according to conceptual and descriptive headings as a means of corroborating my empirical findings as they developed. As I related in Chapter 3, ethnography is an ‘uneasy’ process and I frequently felt uncertain and perplexed regarding which observations were relevant and how to categorise them; Schiellerup refers to this practice as ‘the mysterious process of generating a research narrative based on the data’ (2008:163). My insights and analysis may have been improved by gathering and ordering data earlier in the process of fieldwork, allowing me more time to reflect on my experience as an ethnographer and to assemble conceptual frameworks. Furthermore, I would investigate the analytical tools available in NVivo to construct theoretical models to interrogate my research question.

In the following section of this chapter I explore potential avenues of future research relating to Community Supported Agriculture in the UK.

7.7

Future research on Community Supported Agriculture in the UK

The combination of drivers for more sustainable forms of agriculture, such as climate change, dwindling oil reserves and population growth, are accelerating and the synergies of these factors are likely to become ever more compelling and persuasive. Furthermore, Allen and Wilson claim that ‘what is new is the depth and pace of the crisis’ (2008:534). Hendrickson and Heffernan argue that grassroots local food initiatives including CSAs ‘will potentially become more important *in an increasingly unstable dominant food system*’ (2002:365, my italics). Therefore the concept of CSA is likely to gain increasing relevance and application to food security in the UK in a future transition to more localised and resilient food supply chains (Bickle and Scott-Cato, 2010). Marsden and Franklin maintain that ‘(a)s this crisis unfolds, it is likely that *more voids and spaces* will begin to open up for new post-neoliberal institutional platforms to take hold’ (2013:640, my italics), including a new praxis and polity of AFNs that embrace food security, environmental sustainability, and social justice. CSA projects such as my two case studies comprise a range of ‘actors who embrace a “politics of hope” through their aspirations and imaginaries as well as their day-to-day work’ that have the potential to fill these new openings and opportunities (Andrée et al., 2015:1468).

Consequently, in the context of the UK, research on Community Supported Agriculture and other AFNs will remain an important investigative objective. In particular, research will be

necessary to augment studies in North America which focus on the economic viability of CSAs using quantitative metrics (e.g. Galt et al., 2016; Lass et al., 2005; Polimeni et al., 2006a&b). Further research is also required into the motivations and beliefs of CSA members and non-members alike (e.g. Bougherara et al., 2009; Brehm and Eisenauer, 2008; Cone and Myhre, 2000; Cooley and Lass, 1998; Cox et al., 2008; Feagan and Morris, 2009; Goland, 2002; Hinrichs and Kremer, 2002; Lang, 2010a). Paddock argues that research should be conducted into ‘particular ways of ‘doing’ sustainable food’ such as Community Supported Agriculture and their effect on broader participation in order that AFNs appeal to a wider sector of community (2015:17). As a corollary, further studies of those who do not currently participate in AFNs are also required.

As I described earlier in this chapter, access to land is a constraining factor on the growth of the CSA movement in the UK. At present there is a data lacuna on CSA land-holding in the UK; a systematic analysis of CSA land tenure and its effect on distribution and growth is required. In particular, research on new entrants is needed to consider whether land access is a limiting determinant in establishing CSA schemes. There is also a paucity of research on the broad skills-set required to initiate and operate a CSA, including current training and funding opportunities. In Chapter 4 I discussed how both of my case studies accessed advice and grants from NGOs. In-depth research into land patterns and skills-related themes, on and off the field, can inform the future potential growth of the Community Supported Agriculture movement in the UK.

I previously stated in an earlier section of this chapter that governmental policy at different scales will play an important role in the development of the CSA movement in the UK. Consequently further research into ‘best practice’ institutional support within the UK and elsewhere will also be essential (e.g. Schlicht et al., n.d.). Sonnino and Marsden argue that although social embeddedness has a local/regional dimension, AFNs also take place in ‘the larger society, economy, and polity of which they are part’ (2006a:189). Szreter and Woolcock state that ‘it is crucial to know in what kind of encompassing contexts the networks... are embedded, particularly with respect to the vertical ‘topography’ of power gradients in society’ (2004:654). Therefore, Sonnino and Marsden identify a need for research that ‘account(s) for both the *horizontal* and the *vertical* embeddedness of alternative food networks’ (2006a:190, my italics). Currently there is an absence of research that addresses the local, regional and national governance of Community Supported Agriculture in the UK.

In the preceding section of this chapter I have reflected on pathways for future research on Community Supported Agriculture in the UK. I identified a need for more research on the viability of CSA schemes allied with studies that investigate consumer understandings and

expectations of the concept. I argued that further research is required on access to land in the UK and the diverse range of skills associated with Community Supported Agriculture. I also indicated a lack of research concerning the regulatory landscape of CSAs in the UK.

7.8

Final conclusions

In this thesis I have considered the potential of Community Supported Agriculture to promote resilience and contribute to transition to a more sustainable and localised form of agriculture in the UK. I adopted an *evolutionary* approach to resilience ‘characterised by an emphasis on adaptive capacity and transformation’ (Scott, 2013:597) and I argued that resilience can be considered ‘the ability to “bounce forward” and “move on”’ (Manyena et al., 2011). I situated Community Supported Agriculture as a community-based niche innovation that has the potential to effect transition within the dominant UK food supply regime. I argued that replication (copying in the same form) of small-scale CSAs across the UK is the most likely form of socio-technical transformation.

In respect of AFNs, Calvário and Kallis have stated that ‘the existing literature is stuck in a counter-productive division between celebration and critique’ (2016:1). Positive claims also extend to the potential for Community Supported Agriculture to contribute to socio-technical transitions (Brunori et al., 2011). However, DuPuis has stated that ‘(f)ood studies academics are, in brief, different from popular food reformers: we are analysts; they are advocates’ (2016:680). Although I adopted an active ‘observer as participant’ approach to my research (Dawson, 2010), in this thesis I have attempted to analyse critically the transformative potential my case studies, and of Community Supported Agriculture in the UK.

I have argued that Hazlehurst and COCA comprised aspects that are simultaneously progressive and reactionary but, although both CSAs have transformative potential, it is muted by intrinsic and extrinsic circumstances such as the social homogeneity of the movement, the counter-cultural values of CSA, and an unfavourable policy environment. Conversely, I also identified positive trends at my case studies and in the broader movement of Community Supported Agriculture in the UK.

For example, literature from North America has depicted CSA as insular and exclusionary and I described the narrow social composition of my case studies. However, in the course of my fieldwork I observed an extended community of CSA at scales from the regional to the global. These networks of CSA advance the transformative potential of Community Supported Agriculture between and beyond individual CSA schemes and signal a movement that has

grown in the course of my research and will undoubtedly increase as the concept is transmitted to other communities. It also implies that organisations such as Organic Centre Wales and Urgenci will continue their advocacy of the movement within policy circles, even though their resources and efficacy may be limited at present.

In addition, I described a particular *moral economy of CSA* comprising values and practices that are markedly counter to prevailing consumer expectations of choice, convenience and cost. However, I also depicted the ‘quality turn’ and a cohort of ‘concerned consumers’ that are eschewing mainstream values to invest in their community, the environment, and future generations. I also described how CSA members experienced a ‘graduation effect’ of sustainable consumption behaviours as a consequence of belonging to the schemes. As Hassanein (2003) asserts, change will most likely be incremental and is occurring at a small scale but, as many observers note, the drivers for a more sustainable and localised form of agriculture are becoming ever more immediate and persuasive. Therefore the relevance of the transformative potential of Community Supported Agriculture will also assume greater importance.

Finally, I argued that both my CSAs had limited *capacity* and were dependent on volunteerism to an extent that I characterised as a form of *sacrifice*. As the movement in the UK grows, the concept will adapt and mature as has been witnessed in North America (Lang, 2010a). Although some CSAs in North America have relinquished founding principles such as a direct relationship between producers and consumers the movement has continued to grow in recent years, there currently being at least 6000 examples. The UK situation is less advanced; each of my case studies is less than ten years old as are the majority of CSAs here, but new examples such as Cae Tan CSA¹⁴³ in south-west Wales continue to emerge suggesting that future growth in the form of CSA replication can be anticipated, particularly once the effects of an economic recession have receded.

Kirwan et al. have argued that the material outputs of local food projects can be difficult to measure. As I described in Chapter 6, both of my case studies struggled to remain economically viable. However, the schemes also delivered what Forbes and Harmon describe as the ‘less tangible benefits’ of CSA membership, such as community empowerment and environmental benefits (2007:76). In the context of North America, Schnell has stated that ‘CSA alone will not

¹⁴³ ‘Cae Tan is a member of Gower Power Community Cooperative whose aim is to empower small scale local ownership of food, electrical power and the means of exchange, ultimately leading to a more sustainable society’

Source: <http://www.gowerpower.coop/caetan/>

Cae Tan CSA was established by a former Core Group member of COCA

remake our food system, nor is it a suitable alternative for everybody' (2007:562). Furthermore, Seyfang and Smith state that '(n)iches alone will not seed wider change' but 'are potential sources of innovative ideas, even if not models or blueprints' (2007:589).

Gibson-Graham have depicted the necessity of 'building our own roads as we travel' (2003:157); the niches of Hazlehurst and COCA may not cohere into an intelligible and discrete socio-technical transition, and could even terminate in a cul-de-sac. However, my case studies have demonstrated that, notwithstanding challenges, divergent pathways of food supply in the UK are possible. As Gunderson comments, 'the greatest feat of alternative food systems (is) they have shown alternatives exist' (2014:115).

Marsden and Franklin have stated that:

(s)cholarship in the field of agri-food alternative movements is... at a transformative juncture. It should not fall into the marginalised and conceptual "local trap" of rendering itself "just local" or "just alternative"; or indeed just a rag-bag of ephemeral "initiatives". It is a significant part of building... sustainable and place-based transitions

(2013:640)

Although this study is 'determinedly micro-analytical and ethnographic in its investigation of place-based and socially embedded alternative food practices' (Goodman, 2003:1), COCA and Hazlehurst are both examples of 'a special case study with a broader bearing' (Brewer, 2000:132) on the transformative potential of grassroots innovations. As Starr observes, social movements such as Community Supported Agriculture may be 'long, stuttering conversations' (2010:486) but this research verifies that the discussion is currently being conducted amidst the 'spaces of action' (Hendrickson and Heffernan, 2002:365) that comprise my two case studies and in many other instances, besides, in the UK and across the globe.

In Chapter 3 I described my role on the Veg-Bag Marketing Sub-Group helping to launch the distribution of Hazlehurst's veg-share. Another member of the Management Committee circulated an email towards the end of the launch day:

I know I'm not alone in being exhausted but I think it's time to celebrate where we are and how much we have achieved this year in particular

email from Alan to Hazlehurst Management Committee, 27th July 2012

Having participated for an extended period in two developing CSA schemes, I share Alan's cautious optimism concerning the achievements and potential of Community Supported Agriculture to inform future socio-technical transitions. My study represents a modest contribution to identifying alternative food futures in the UK that can be adapted to different circumstances and empower ordinary citizens to recover partial control and collective responsibility for elements of their own food supply.

Appendices

A Typology of AFNs in Sheffield (March 2011)

Educational

- The School for Vegetables
- The Green Groove
- Whirlow Hall Farm Trust
- High Riggs Nursery c/o Freeman College

Therapeutic

- Tradebase Trust Community Allotment
- SAGE Greenfingers (Support Arts Gardening Education)
- Darnall Wellbeing Allotment
- Greave House Farm Trust (Stocksbridge)

Urban Growing

- Grow Sheffield (including Abundance)
- HERB (Helping Environmental Regeneration in Broomhall)
- SOFI (Sheffield Organic Food Initiative)
- Burngreave Garden Share

Healthy Living Promotion

- SureStart Community Allotment (under-5s)
- Local Enterprise Around Food (LEAF)
- Incredible Edible Pennine c/o Pennine Housing
- The Growing Together Project c/o Sheffield City Council
- Handsworth Community Gardens Trust
- Tinsley Community Allotment
- Norfolk Park Community Allotment

Social Enterprise

- Manor Oaks Farm Enterprise c/o Green Estates
- Heeley City Farm
incorporating Wortley Hall Walled Garden
& Meersbook Park Walled Garden
- Hazelhurst CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) Cooperative
- Loxley Valley Community Farm (CSA)
- Crosspool Harvest
- Rhubarb Farm (Bolsover)
- Greenfingers @ Norton Nurseries, Graves Park

Leisure Cultivation

- Meersbrook Organic Growers Society (MOGS)
- 3,500 allotments on 74 sites; some affiliated to Sheffield Allotments and Leisure Gardeners Federation

Community Gardens

- Langdon Street Community Garden
- Carfield Farm Community Garden
- Parson Cross Park Community Garden
- Woodbank Crescent Community Garden
- Walkley Community Recreational Trust
- Stocksbridge Community Gardens Group
- The Ponderosa Community Orchard

Thursday 20th September 2012

Dear Hazlehurst CSA subscriber,

I very much hope you enjoy the contents of your veg-bag this week.

My name is Ian Humphrey and, as you may know, I currently serve on the Hazlehurst Management Committee as a Member Without Portfolio. However, I am also conducting a research degree, or PhD, into the potential of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) in the U.K.

As part of my research I would like to speak to individuals who subscribe to a CSA. As a Hazlehurst subscriber I am writing to you to ask whether you would be prepared to participate in a short interview to discuss your views on CSA. I would like to speak to you for roughly 30-40 minutes and, ideally, I would like to record our conversation so that I have an accurate record of our discussion. I can meet you on a weekday (daytime/evenings) at any location (at home/at the field/in Sheffield) that is convenient for you.

There is no immediate benefit to individuals in taking part in this research but it would allow me to better understand why CSAs are popular, or not, how individuals perceive their membership, and how they understand CSA in general. I do hope you will consider participating in this study. On the reverse side I have provided a more detailed Information Sheet to give you an overview of my research project. If you are interested in taking part, or would just like to get some more information before making a decision, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me either by email or telephone.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter,

Ian Humphrey

Member Without Portfolio, Hazlehurst CSA Management Committee

PhD candidate, Department of Geography, University of Sheffield

Email: i.humphrey@sheffield.ac.uk

Mob: 078** *** ****



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POST-GRADUATE (PhD) RESEARCH PROJECT

INFORMATION SHEET

Title of Project:

What is the potential of Community Supported Agriculture to promote resilience and transition in the UK?

Name of Researcher: *Ian Humphrey*

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others, if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear, or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

The purpose of this research is to study the potential of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) to effect change to a more sustainable food supply chain in the U.K. The context of this work can be described as dependency on oil-derived energy ('peak oil'); the uncertain effects of climate change ('global warming'); and continued global population growth. In combination these factors may threaten the future supply of food across the globe and the environmental sustainability of the planet itself. The research consists of a comparison of two recently established and different models of CSA in the UK. The intention is to observe the possible effects of CSAs at different scales: on the *individual* member; within the *community*; and as a broader *social movement*.

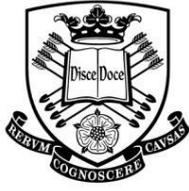
The study will last approximately 12 months and will mostly consist of me observing and taking part in the running of the CSA. From time to time, though, I would like to interview individuals about the CSA and this process could be repeated, if we both agree. Each interview would last no more than an hour and I would like to record the interview so I have an accurate record of our conversation. However, I can take written notes if you are more comfortable with that. All interviews will be arranged at your convenience, wherever is most suitable for you. The information that is collected during the course of the research, including any recordings, will be stored on a password-protected computer. Your identity will always be kept anonymous in any report or other publication that is produced. I would like to take photographs during the research. If you do not wish to have your photograph taken please indicate on the *Consent Form*. Whilst there are no immediate benefits to the individual in participating in this project, it is hoped that this study will make a contribution to understanding the future potential of CSAs in the UK.

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this Information Sheet to keep (and be asked to sign and keep a Consent Form) and you can still withdraw at any time during the research, for any reason.

For further information please contact Ian Humphrey:

by email: i.humphrey@sheffield.ac.uk; **or by telephone:** 078** *** **.

This research is funded by the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Sheffield. The study has been approved by the Ethics Review Panel of the Department of Geography. If you are unhappy with any aspect of the research process and wish to make a complaint please contact, in the first instance, the Primary Supervisor of the project who is Dr. Matt Watson at the Department of Geography, University of Sheffield. Dr. Watson can be contacted by email: m.watson@sheffield.ac.uk or by telephone: 0114 222 7911. If you are not satisfied and wish to pursue the matter further, please contact the Registrar and Secretary of the University of Sheffield who can be contacted by email: registrar@sheffield.ac.uk or by telephone: 0114 222 1100.



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POST-GRADUATE (PhD) RESEARCH PROJECT

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project:

What is the potential of Community Supported Agriculture to promote resilience and transition in the UK?

Name of Researcher: *Ian Humphrey*

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the accompanying Information Sheet relating to the
above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, for any
reason, without giving a reason.
3. I understand that my responses will be anonymised.
4. I am/am not prepared to have my photograph taken (*delete as applicable*).
5. I agree to take part in the above research project.

Name of participant	Date	Signature
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Researcher Mobile: 078** *** **	Date	Signature
------------------------------------	------	-----------

(To be signed and dated in the presence of the participant)

Copies:

Once this has been signed by both parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be placed in the project's main record, which must be kept in a secure location.

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