(Not) Beyond Consumption: Citizen Engagement in Food Politics

by

Cathryn Elizabeth Sprague

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Department of Resource Economics and Environmental Sociology
University of Alberta

Abstract

Many accounts of Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) describe them as cohesive social movements that adequately address the social and environmental externalities of food and agricultural production. Yet others question whether initiatives that focus on localized consumer driven change can provide radical transformation of social systems. This thesis takes up this debate, using data from interviews and participant observation of key actors in AFNs in Edmonton, Alberta to explore civic engagement in food politics. While this study sought to go beyond consumption, by integrating data from producers, consumers and everyday citizens, findings indicate that there is an overwhelming emphasis on consumer driven change amongst all groups, bringing into question the efficacy of such approaches. Overall, this thesis emphasizes the need to engage in a food politics that critically examines the root contextual, political, and institutional factors that underpin the negative externalities associated with our food and agricultural systems.

Preface

The research project "Fed Up: A Case Study of Food Citizenship in Two Canadian Cities," of which this research is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, "Beyond Production and Consumption: Mapping Citizen Engagement in Sustainable Food in the Public Sphere," No. Pro00039568, May 22, 2014.

Ch. 2 of this thesis is to be published in Anderson, Colin, Jennifer Brady, and Charles Z. Levkoe. Forthcoming. *Food Studies: Transgressing Boundaries Through Critical Inquiry.*

As a member of the research team, I was responsible for data collection and analysis as well as initial manuscript composition. Emily Huddart Kennedy was a supervisory author and assisted with concept formation, data collection, analysis, and manuscript composition.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to Tung, my endless source of laughter and inspiration.

Acknowledgements

First I would like to extend my thanks to my supervisors, who have taught me so much about research and writing over the past two years. Emily, you have been a wonderful mentor to me. I really appreciate the many hours you spent talking through the research with me and the numerous drafts you helped me write. Debra and John, it was a pleasure taking your classes, both of which influenced the ultimate direction my thesis went in and helped provide a strong foundation in theory and research methods. Hannah, your written work has been very influential and I appreciate the critical eye you bring to research and writing. You have all shown me how interesting and important critical environmental sociology can be!

To my family: mom, dad, the Stuarts, Cindy, and Tung. You have always been there for me through my many years of school and I cannot put into words how much this means to me. Your homes and gardens have been an endless source of inspiration, good meals, and good friendship.

Finally, I want to extend my thanks to everyone who participated in this research. My favourite part of my thesis work was sitting down, usually over a shared snack, to hear the stories you shared about food and agriculture. While I push back a little bit in this thesis, questioning how advocates can further push the boundaries, I am inspired by the dedication, passion, and love of good food that you have shared with me.

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Glossary of Terms

Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) – Alternative food networks are comprised of producers and consumers who work to present alternatives to the way food is produced, to improve access to local, organic and fair trade foods, promote community health and nutrition, bolster the local economy, reduce environmental degradation, and create more sustainable cities (Goodman, DuPuis, and Goodman 2011).

Civic practices – Civic practices are public sphere activities, which create physical or conceptual spaces to talk about collective issues (Eliasoph 1996, 2011, 2013; Parkins and Davidson 2008).

Collective action – The coordinated actions of a group of actors that seeks to advance common goals. For instance, this may include coordinated appearances, public meetings, or protests (Wright and Boudet 2012).

Community of practice – A group of people with similar interests and knowledge, who engage in similar activities to create opportunities for collective learning about best practices (Wenger and Snyder 2000).

Cultural politics – Are comprised of social practices and spatial forms, and is the domain where meanings are formed and contested (Jackson 1991:200).

Food citizenship – A food citizen engages in civic practices that promote equitable, socially and environmentally sustainable, and cultural vibrant food systems (Delind 2002; Welsh and Macrae 1998; Wilkins 2005).

Foodies – The term foodies is contested in that is has been critiqued for failing to address social justice concerns, however I use the term as Desmarais and Wittman (2014) and Johnston and Baumann (2010) do, to refer to eaters, locavores, and consumer-citizens.

Social movement – Occurs when communities respond to a project, plan, or policy using noninstitutionalized forms of action, including public meetings, protests, and demonstrations. These movements often form when there is the need or opportunity, as well as the resources and capacity to organize on a collective level (Wright and Boudet 2012).

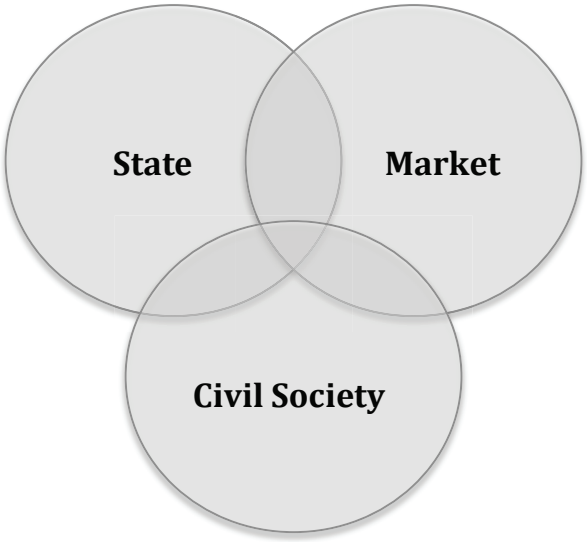
Chapter One
Introduction

The negative social and environmental consequences of the ways food is grown, packaged, transported, distributed, eaten, and ultimately, disposed of is a growing international concern which has become a significant topic in academic debate. Scholars and foodies alike have characterized Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) as transformative social movements with the potential to create positive changes in the food system by reducing the negative social and environmental impacts of food and agriculture (Koc et al. 2008; Levkoe 2011; Morgan 2009; Wakefield 2007). AFNs provide alternatives to the current system and share new ways of doing things among a network of consumers and producers (Goodman et al. 2011). They also provide opportunities for citizens to engage in changing the food system on a daily basis, through how they eat and produce food, as well as through involvement in community activities.

A growing body of literature examines the role of producers and consumers in AFNs, demonstrating the multitude of ways in which actors aim to improve access to local, organic and fair trade foods, promote community health and nutrition, bolster the local economy, reduce environmental degradation, and create more sustainable cities (Goodman et al. 2011). Yet few have integrated empirical findings that include both urban and rural, producers and consumers, or looked beyond these dichotomous categories to include actors working in other parts of the food system. This research aims to fill that gap by using a broader sampling strategy including farmers, community organizers, entrepreneurs, educators, and policy makers in both urban and rural locations and focusing on the daily ways in which citizens engage to change the food system. I aimed to recruit actors from three areas, civil society (e.g., community organizers, educators, volunteers), the state (e.g., federal and provincial policy makers), and the market (e.g., entrepreneurs, farmers' market managers). These categories are not mutually exclusive, instead there is extensive overlap between all three, as demonstrated in Figure 1. For instance, the farmers I spoke with participated in both the civil society and marketplace activities to encourage food system change. Sampling from a broader range of actors than most studies, provided insight into

the different ways that actors envisioned social change as well as the practices that they use to reach these goals.

Figure 1 Sampling Strategy: State, Market, and Civil Society



While some scholars are largely positive about the potential for AFNs to transform the food system (Koc et al. 2008; Levkoe 2011; Morgan 2009; Wakefield 2007), others are more cautious, warning that these alternative networks may fail to adequately address social justice issues or confront power relations (Alkon and Mares 2012; Allen 2010; Guthman 2008; Sbicca 2012). To take up this debate, this research draws on an empirical case study of local food in Edmonton, Alberta. I explore the cultural politics of these alternative food networks, analyze the potential for these activities to be considered a transformative social movement, and consider the significance of these findings.

Research Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research is to explore the civic practices of citizens working to foster sustainable food systems. To do so, I employ qualitative techniques, including data from 22 in-depth semi-structured individual interviews and participant observation of five food-focused meetings and events. These methods provide insight into the context of

contemporary citizen engagement in Edmonton, and an in-depth look at the experiences and interpretations of the actors involved. The following chapters provide complementary explorations of civic engagement that will be considered in tandem in the concluding chapter of this thesis. The first, Chapter Two, describes the ideologies, discourses, and civic practices of participants to illustrate the cultural politics of local food initiatives. Next, Chapter Three situates the civic practices of the participants along a spectrum from community of practice to social movement. These chapters provide theoretical and practical insight into the potential for these activities to foster transformative social change in the food system.

The objectives of this research are to explore the civic practices that citizens in Edmonton use to promote and create sustainable food systems, identify the social context in which these practices are situated, and draw from existing literature to consider the challenges citizens face when engaging in civic practices. The broad objectives of this research are addressed in the papers that comprise chapter one and two, respectively:

1. How, and to what extent, do the cultural politics of alternative food networks create opportunities to foster a more just and sustainable food system?

2. How, and to what extent, do the discourses, strategies, and activities of alternative food networks fit with scholarly definitions of social movements?

To address these objectives, I draw on a case study of an alternative food network in the Edmonton, Alberta region using data from interviews and participant observation.

Methods

To gain a deeper and richer understanding of civic practices in the public sphere, I used a qualitative approach to data collection to provide insight into the context of food citizenship in Edmonton. I used a grounded theory approach to data collection and analysis (Bryant and Charmaz 2007; Clarke 2003; Corbin and Strauss 2008). This strategy of inquiry was chosen because grounded theory is well suited to studying change, process, and social construction (Morse and Richards 2002), emphasizing how broader environmental and contextual factors influence social change (Corbin and Strauss 2008).

This analytic approach can be used to create or contribute to meta level theory that is grounded in data (ibid). In this thesis I combine the analytical techniques of Corbin and Strauss (2008) and Charmaz (2001), situating myself as a critical realist. Throughout study design and data collection, constant comparison was made with the literature, to formulate initial hypotheses and assist with data analysis (Corbin and Strauss 2008). Recognizing that data collection and analysis is a co-construction (Bryant and Charmaz 2007; Corbin and Strauss 2008; Heath and Cowley 2004), I aimed to use existing literature along with the data collected in this study to contribute to practical and theoretical understandings of civic engagement. As grounded theory follows an iterative process, new questions and themes can develop during data collection and analysis (Corbin and Strauss 2008). This became clear as the interviews progressed, with new categories and codes emerging. While I began the study focusing more narrowly in civic practices and citizenship, it became clear as the research progressed that theoretical and lay person understandings of social movements, advocacy, and activism were also key parts of the analysis.

This study draws on two key sources of data, 22 semi-structured, in-depth individual interviews and five participant observation events. The sampling strategy aimed to recruit leaders from civil, state, and market spheres, including community organizers and volunteers, farmers, entrepreneurs, educators, and policy makers. Table 1 describes the sampling by sector of involvement. Although many participants fit in more than one category, this table categorizes participants by the category the majority of their food or agriculture related work fit in to.

Table 1 Sampling by sector of involvement

Sector of involvement	Number of participants	Details
State	4	Municipal, provincial, federal government employees
Market	8	Farmers (cattle, goats, dairy, chickens, grain, vegetables and fruit), farmers market managers, entrepreneurs
Civil	10	Community organizers and leaders of food advocacy organizations that focused on: gleaning, workshops, community gardens, community farms, community kitchens, and alternative agriculture demonstration sites

I distributed a flyer (see appendix A) at food-focused events and meetings and directly contacted individuals based on knowledge of their involvement in promoting food systems that were healthy for both people and the planet. As I received responses from more than 40 potential participants, I narrowed down the sample by asking some questions about their involvement in the food system (questions listed in Appendix B). Many of those who responded worked on alternative food projects at the individual level, such as growing a garden at home, buying organic food, or raising urban hens. As I aimed to speak with people involved in their *community* to promote healthy food systems, I narrowed down the sample to include only individuals who worked on a community level project. Each potential participant was also provided with an information letter and consent form, included in Appendix C.

Once I explained this in further detail, many of the initial respondents self selected out of the study, as their work focused on very individual level actions, such as home gardening. I also used the screening questions included in Appendix B to conduct theoretical sampling as the interviews progressed (Corbin and Strauss 2008) and ensure the sample included individuals from civil society, the state, and the market. Following a grounded theory methodology, interviews and participant observation was continued until saturation was reached (Corbin and Strauss 2008). As new questions arose from the data, I also followed up with previous participants via phone, email, or in person, following an iterative approach to data collection and analysis (Corbin and Strauss 2008).

The interviews and observation events were conducted in the greater Edmonton region, up to two hours outside of Edmonton. The semi-structured individual interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 3 hours. During the interview, we discussed what the participant thought an ideal food system looked like, how they aimed to foster this, whether or not they considered their work to be political, and what challenges they had faced in their food-related work. A complete interview guide is included in Appendix D and where quotations or descriptions have been included in the text, pseudonyms have been used to protect the identity of the participants and some details about their occupation or work have been changed or excluded to provide anonymity. I also asked each participant if there were any upcoming food-focused meetings or events that I could participate in and

observe. I went to a meeting that discussed the potential for a food hub to be developed, a work bee at a community garden that served inner city residents, a community consultation for a university-led urban agriculture project, a networking event for foodies, and a meeting of a citizens advisory panel. Table 2 describes each event I attended. After each event I recorded field notes using a template adapted from Blee's (2012) study of social movements. I noted who attended the event, who led the discussion, what they were speaking about, and which civic practices were discussed or used. This template is included in Appendix E. I analyzed these field notes along with interview transcripts.

Table 2 Participant Observation Events

Event	Participants sector of involvement	Details
Food hub discussion	Civil society	Various stakeholders in an inner city neighborhood met to discuss the potential for a food hub to be developed nearby
Community garden work bee	Farmers; civil society	Inner city residents, farmers, volunteers, and inner city service agencies got together to harvest produce for the inner city service agencies
University consultation for urban agriculture	Civil society; state; market	The university led a discussion with university staff, faculty, and students, as well as community members about the future of the campus farm
Foodie networking event	Civil society; market	Local foodies, business owners, and farmers met over drinks to discuss local food
Citizens advisory panel	Civil society; state	Members of civil society met to discuss how government could create and implement policy and programs to promote food and agriculture

Research Setting

This research was conducted within the greater Edmonton, Alberta area, with interviews taking place up to two hours outside the city limits. In the thesis, I will use Edmonton as shorthand to refer to this region, which includes both urban and rural settings, because the Edmonton context was the key focus of many of the interviews as well

as the meetings and events I attended. Edmonton was chosen for this study because its proximity to farmland provided the opportunity to interview producers, consumers, and others. During study design, controversy over the annexation of the farmland to the Northeast of the city was peaking, and the city was just beginning to develop its first food and agriculture strategy as well as form a food council. Like many other cities in North America, food was becoming a prominent issue in municipal politics, providing a rich opportunity for exploratory inquiry into citizen engagement.

In the months before the interviews, a number of local organizations had worked to mobilize citizens to attend the municipal food and agriculture hearings, where Edmonton's city council listed to input from citizens panels and deliberated a new citywide strategy for food and agriculture. While over 500 citizens had attended the hearings (Beckie, Hanson, and Schrader 2013), many considered the outcomes to be disappointing. *Fresh: Edmonton's Food and Urban Agriculture Strategy* was implemented in 2012, yet some argued the wording was not specific enough to incite substantive changes to policy or practice. For instance, the strategy discusses how its success will be apparent when "prime farmland is protected" (p. v), yet no specific means for doing so were included in the strategy, and city council went on to approve the development of the farmland Northeast of Edmonton shortly after. Further, a key "win" from the hearings was that a food council would be formed, though activists and advocates later learned this provision had already been mandated during the most recent Municipal Development Plan in 2010 (City of Edmonton 2010:100:section 10.1.1.1). Also, given that the most productive food-growing lands are located outside the city limits, it is interesting that the strategy was titled Food and *Urban* Agriculture.

After these events, I began data collection, focusing on how and why citizens promoted change to the food system. During the hearings, Edmonton residents did engage directly with government, though I did not observe this during data collection, as the study did not begin until a few months after the hearings were complete. After the hearings, many began to shift their focus to alternative food projects, such as food hubs, educational programming, and community gardens. I observed how many of these projects operated primarily between civic and market spheres, without directly challenging the state or

asking for their support. Further, many of these projects, whether conducted by farmers, community organizers, educators, or government employees, focused primarily on getting consumers to buy, grow, and cook more local food. While a number of scholars (Morgan 2009; Wakefield 2007) and practitioners call local food an important social movement, others have called into question whether a network that focuses almost exclusively on changing consumption patterns can be considered a social movement at all (Goodman et al. 2011; Johnston and Szabo 2010; Lynch and Giles 2013; McIntyre and Rondeau 2011). Working on alternative food projects that encourage consumers to buy local food was common among participants, prompting me to aim to describe the cultural politics of local food activities and promote a deeper understanding of the contextual characteristics that surround contemporary citizen engagement.

The Cultural Politics of Alternative Food: From Social Movement to Community of Practice

This thesis addresses these objectives in the following chapters, using meso-level social theory, grounded in the data I collected, to characterize and understand civic engagement with the food system. Chapter Two explores the cultural politics of local food initiative in Edmonton and Chapter Three situates these initiatives along a spectrum of civic engagement, from community of practice to social movement. Both chapters highlight the prominence that local food places on the role of the citizen-consumer. To provide insight into citizen engagement in the public sphere, this thesis draws on three key bodies of literature that span political sociology, environmental sociology, and cultural theory: civic practices, cultural politics, and social movements.

Theoretical work connected to the concept of civic practices serves as the overarching theoretical framework for this thesis. That is, I use the concept of civic practices to focus my examination of civic engagement on the ways in which actors interact in the public sphere to create contexts to talk about politics and public life (Eliasoph 1996, 2011, 2013; Parkins and Davidson 2008). The etiquette of these physical and conceptual spaces is important here, as this shapes which issues dominate public life, which are ignored, and what is done to address them. In Chapter Two I explore ideology, discourse,

and civic practices to develop an understanding of the cultural politics in this case study. These systems of thought all shape and define which issues are prominent in the public sphere and ultimately, help to define how actors in AFNs participate in food politics. Civic practices frame the discussion in Chapter Three, about the type of citizenship that was observed in Edmonton's local food initiatives.

Chapter Two, "I Say Tomato" focuses on the cultural politics of alternative food networks, situating a Canadian case study in the discussion of how, and to what extent do alternative food networks incite, or have the potential to incite, transformative social change. Here, I compare the ideologies, discourses, and civic practices that were observed and noted during interview with those found in other empirical examples. This paper has been accepted as a chapter in Anderson, Colin, Jennifer Brady, and Charles Z. Levkoe. Forthcoming. *Food Studies: Transgressing Boundaries Through Critical Inquiry.*

Chapter Three, "I'm an Advocate, not an Activist" situates my empirical case study along a spectrum from community of practice to social movement, drawing from an extensive literature review of a global food sovereignty movement, La Vía Campesina. This chapter takes up the debate over whether local food initiatives can be considered social movements, and explores the implications of these findings for transformative social change as well as for future work in food studies.

Potential Limitations

While case studies are potentially limited in that they only provide a snapshot of a group of people in one context at one time, they can also provide a rich and detailed picture of how social processes occur (Lockie 2008). This study cannot be generalized to all local food initiatives or alternative food networks; however, these findings are similar to those of other scholars who have studied citizen participation in food and agriculture in other jurisdictions. For instance, Allen et al.'s (2003) study of the changing landscape of alternative food in California revealed a similar emphasis on consumer-driven change and Desmarais and Wittman's (2014) paper discussed how a citizen-consumer model of citizenship dominates urban alternative food networks in Canada. While further study of the ways that food politics are operationalized in various settings is needed, the similarities

between a case study of Edmonton and other empirical work in food studies indicates that there exists a strong potential for overlap amongst alternative food initiatives. Thus the findings in this research are relevant to other regions.

Although I aimed to provide a broader sampling of participants with respect to their sector of involvement, choosing to recruit individuals participating in civil, state, and market based activities, the sampling strategy ultimately resulted in a relatively socially homogenous group. Many of the participants were white, university-educated, had rural ties, and were roughly of the same socio-economic (middle to upper) class. While participant observation revealed that a relatively homogenous group populated many of the spaces where local food activities occurred, it is possible that there are other networks that were not reached. As others have indicated that there is the potential for parallel alternative networks to form that do not interact or overlap extensively with other local food networks, such as the parallel networks of Chinese Canadians in the Vancouver area that Gibb and Wittman (2013) observed, the possibility remains the sampling methods used during this research did not enable me to access these networks. Potentially, there are other alternative food networks in Edmonton that focus on more than just local food consumption. However, my own involvement in sustainable food initiatives in the city has revealed an overwhelming emphasis on local food in popular media, online communities, and among foodies themselves.

In addition to resulting in a relatively homogenous group, while the sampling strategy of this study was able to look beyond the consumer/producer dichotomy that is common in the literature, there are still some groups whose food work I was not able to highlight. For instance, farm labourers, temporary foreign workers, grocery store owners, food distributors, waste managers, and packagers all play an important role in the food system and each likely have a different vision and approach to changing it. This is an area that could be emphasized in future research.

While the possibility remains that other local food initiatives have broadly integrated concepts such as justice and environmental sustainability, framed their struggle as global as well as local, and engaged with the state and other institutional actors, I have not found extensive literature that suggests the findings of this case study are rare or

unusual. As Edmonton is of a similar size and demographic makeup to other medium-sized North American cities, such as Calgary, Alberta; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Austin, Texas; and Salt Lake City, Utah (Statistics Canada 2012; U.S. Census Bureau 2012a, 2012b), this study provides insights that may be relevant to other regions. While every region has a unique context that shapes civic responses to food and agriculture issues, it is possible that local food initiatives in these regions experience similar challenges and limitations.

Significance and Contributions

This research provides important theoretical contributions to food studies and environmental sociology, and is also relevant for practitioners such as community organizers, policy makers, and others who are interested in transforming the food system. By analyzing the contextual and social factors that influence civic engagement in food politics, this study highlights some of the potential strengths and weaknesses of local food initiatives specifically, and citizen engagement more generally. Thus far I have shared some of the results of this study with the community through blog posts and further participation in food-focused events and meetings. Additionally, I hope to share the final results through media outlets and continued participation in local food politics. Given the relative infancy of Edmonton's *Food and Urban Agriculture Strategy*, as well as its burgeoning Food Council, this research is well-timed to contribute to municipal and regional food politics. Although this research is not generalizable to all alternative food networks, its relevance extends beyond the Edmonton region and I have tried to provide specific descriptions of the Edmonton context so that readers are able to draw conclusions about the relevance of these findings to other jurisdictions.

When I began writing my research proposal, I noticed a general trend in food studies literature, whereby most of the empirical work focused on the citizen-consumer. While a number of scholars emphasize the importance of overcoming the producer / consumer dichotomy, there tend to be more empirical work in North America studying the citizen-consumer than the producer. Further, many studies focus on either the producer or the consumer, failing to integrate examinations of the two types of actors and ignoring other participants in the food system. This observation helped to shape the methods and

sampling strategy I chose, ultimately leading me to consider a broader range of actors than most food studies. Using this sampling strategy I was able to interview individuals working in all aspects of the food system, including production (farmers), processing (jam makers), distribution (direct marketers), access (food security advocates), consumption (eaters, volunteers), waste/recycling (gleaners who rescue food waste), government (policy makers, planners), and civil society (community organizers).

Chapter Two compares the discourse and civic practices of the groups I spoke with, revealing that while the practices of actors in all groups focuses on encouraging sustainable consumption, there is a distinct difference in the discourses of farmers. Farmers discuss the environment in much more detail than other groups. Given the daily interaction farmers have with the environment, it is not surprising that they discuss it in more detail. As both the environmental and social impacts of food and agriculture are important aspects of food politics, this finding is significant. While future research could go further, by examining a more extensive range of actors, the sampling methods of this study contributes to scholarship on food politics, citizenship, and civic practices by integrating perspectives from a broad range of actors and providing rich descriptions of their experiences.

Using food as a case study to examine civic practices, this study contributes more broadly to contemporary literature on the public sphere and civic engagement. Initially, when I drafted my research proposal, I focused on questioning how and why food citizens engaged in civic practices to promote food systems that were healthy for both people and the planet. Yet extant literature on civic practices, particularly empirical work that examines how civic practices are enacted in daily life, is difficult to find. Eliasoph (1996, 2011, 2013) discusses civic engagement more broadly, providing the basis for my discussion of political consciousness and civic practices. Her work focuses on how civic practices create contexts to discuss public sphere issues. Thus the term civic practices acts as a sensitizing concept, focusing my work here on *how* actors in local food initiatives engage in food politics.

When I first began the interviews, having recently attended a talk by Michael Bell entitled “Food is not a System, It’s Politics,” and observing Edmonton’s Food and Urban Agriculture public hearings, which were attended by over 500 citizens, I went in with the

assumption that food was inherently political. It was not until the third interview that I realized that some of the participants I recruited did not see their work as political or that they might potentially resist this classification. During this interview, Charlotte, who taught cooking classes using sustainable ingredients, discussed how she did not enjoy the political aspects of food and tried to avoid them. This prompted me to integrate a question about food politics into the interviews, asking each participant about how they defined the term and whether or not they thought their own work was political. This question provided a rich topic for discussion, and allowed me to compare the perceptions of actors working in different parts of the food system. It also became a key theme in data analysis. Discovering that the majority of participants did not consider their food work to be political has important implications for both theory and practice.

Building upon this discussion, Chapter Three focuses on developing a deeper understanding of how the discourse, strategies, and activities of alternative food networks compare with traditional social movements. Currently, there is an extensive amount of literature that focuses on social movement tactics (Johnson, Agnone, and McCarthy 2010), networks (Krinsky and Crossley 2014; Passy 2001; Saunders 2007), and organization (Diani and Bison 2004; Friedland 2010; Johnson et al. 2010). While this literature provides a broad theoretical understanding of what a social movement is, there has not been extant discussion of whether or not local food initiatives comprise a social movement or a synthetic exploration of how these initiatives could be classified. Chapter Three contributes to the literature on food movements by providing a means of characterizing collective civic engagement efforts and drawing stronger connections between food studies literature and the rich sociological tradition of studying social movements.

Given the amount of energy that currently resides in local food initiatives, further development of whether or not these initiatives have the potential to transform the food system is imperative. While actors in these initiatives have a range of goals, ultimately, they aim to improve the food system and offer alternatives to current ways of consuming and producing. This thesis takes a critical look at these goals and ideals, questioning whether these initiatives comprise a social movement and examining the potential for local food initiatives to reduce the negative environmental and social impacts of food and agriculture.

A number of studies have taken up this debate, particularly in the western United States. What this paper contributes is a case study from Canada, which critically examines how food politics is embodied in daily life and explores broadly accepted terms, such as food movement and food politics.

Reflecting on my Own Food Work

Food and agriculture are topics close to my own heart, which is part of the reason I chose food as a way to study civic engagement. I grew up roaming my grandma's farm every summer, riding combines with my uncles, and gardening with my mom. For me, spending hours in the garden brings back happy memories of my childhood. I recently started a micro farm, growing organic vegetables on repurposed urban land. Throughout this research I had the opportunity to re-evaluate my own ideal conceptions of agriculture and critically consider how my own actions have the potential reproduce the dominant paradigm. As I reflect on my own work, I am conscious that it very much falls into the realm of the builder and weaver (Stevenson et al. 2007).[1]

Many of the organizations I volunteer for explicitly focus on local and regional food issues. Part of the reason I am drawn to this work is because it is hopeful and positive. All too often when I consider broad global environmental issues, I feel overwhelmed and as though my actions cannot make a difference. Yet in my food work I do see the daily impacts that community gardens, organic agriculture, and educational programs can have on local communities. This positive energy is where the strength of local food lies. If we can take this same vibrancy and enthusiasm and apply it to global food system issues, such as food security and environmental degradation, keeping a critical eye to their root causes, perhaps there is real opportunity to create a vibrant and global food movement.

One of the great benefits of undertaking qualitative work has been the connections and relationships I have been able to form with people working to change the food system.

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[1] Stevenson et al. (2007) discuss the three types of actors that make up a social movement: the weavers (who create networks and relationships), the builders (who create or demonstrate alternatives to the current system), and the warriors (who engage with state and institutions to promote structural change).

While interviews and observation provided rich data, these one-time events provide a snapshot in time. Being a member of some of Edmonton's alternative food initiatives has allowed me to see how political consciousness can shift over time. During our interviews, Charlotte, who taught cooking classes that focused on sustainable ingredients, discussed how food was political, yet she did not see her cooking classes as political. However, anecdotally, I noticed a shift in her involvement in food over the past year.[2] Recently, when the urban micro farm project I was working on was put on hold due to lack of city regulations regarding urban agriculture, Charlotte offered to organize a protest to help out. While we ended up resolving the issue and have been accepted as a pilot project, I was surprised that she was willing to take on warrior style actions to support the project given her previous rejection of food politics (Stevenson et al. 2007). While the conclusions that this case study provides indicate that local food initiatives in Edmonton are deliberately positioned as positive, apolitical activities, these findings are not intended to discount the work that these initiatives do. Instead, this study aims to provide rich descriptions of context and daily practices that actors use to foster food system change. These findings do not preclude the possibility that political consciousness can ebb and flow nor do they indicate that the goals of local food are inadequate. Instead, I hope to foster a critical discussion of how political consciousness forms and how and why local food may discourage critical public debate about the root causes of food system challenges.

[2] Participant's names have been changed throughout this thesis.

Chapter Two
I Say Tomato, You Say Tomah-to, But If You Only Tasted A Home Grown Tomato: The cultural politics of an alternative food network

Abstract

Existing research claims that alternative food projects have the power to address social and environmental justice issues. From an alternative perspective, some argue that such claims are a hyperbole: that instead, local food projects have the potential to reproduce existing social inequalities and do little to challenge the structures that oppose ecological sustainability. This chapter engages in this debate asking, what are the cultural politics of alternative food networks (AFNs) in Edmonton, and how do these cultural politics shape the transformative potential of AFNs? This chapter addresses these questions by talking with and observing community organizers, farmers, entrepreneurs, educators, and policy makers in the greater Edmonton, Alberta area. Recent theorizing from food studies and political sociology is integrated to explore the efficacy of the practice of "voting with your fork." These findings indicate that the discourses of taste, pleasure, and reconnection dominate AFNs in Edmonton, shaping a cultural politics that largely does not address power relations, embrace critical public dialogue, or engage a broad range of actors in environmental issues.

Key words: food; consumption; production; sustainable agriculture; farmers; citizen-consumer hybrid; alternative food networks; food politics

Introduction

Given concerns over the uneven social, environmental, and economic impacts of food and agriculture, the potential for citizen engagement in food politics to transform the food system has become a significant topic of discussion among foodies and academics. A number of scholars suggest that Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) in Canada can be transformative social movements, despite (Levkoe 2011; Wakefield 2007), or even as part of, neoliberal politics (Koc et al. 2008). Largely led by civil and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), AFNs have taken up projects addressing all aspects of the food system, from growing to processing, distribution, access, consumption, waste, and recycling, providing new opportunities for producers and consumers to interact and organize (Goodman et al. 2011). Actors in AFNs have a number of goals, including better access to local, organic or fair trade food, improved community health and nutrition, the local economy, food security, and reduced environmental degradation (ibid). Despite varied intents, Wakefield (2007) argues that these "disparate social actors" have formed a movement that directly resists the "dominant corporate-industrial food system" (p. 331). Similarly, Morgan (2009) suggests that these networks form "one of the most important social movements of the early twenty-first century in the global north" (p. 343). Levkoe (2011) offers suggestions for how these initiatives can transform the food system, by practicing reflexive localism, recognizing that we need to do more than buy local food to address environmental and social justice issues, building collective subjectivities that encourage broader political engagement, and changing the food system as a whole by integrating concerns over social justice, health, sustainability, and democratic governance.[3]

While these accounts emphasize the beneficial aspects of alternative food, by focusing on projects with positive outcomes, it is possible that they may fail to acknowledge the potential for inequality and hegemony to influence food politics. These positive accounts often fail to critically examine the ways that food politics reproduce existing power relations or question whether they address institutional barriers to food

[3] Reflexive localism was first introduced by DuPuis and Goodman (2005), who argue that while localism can be a site of inequality and hegemonic domination, localism can be practiced reflexively to include both social justice and environmental concerns.

system change (Lynch and Giles 2013). Critical social scientists have argued that many scholars in food studies do not undertake empirical examination or adequately theorize concepts such as power, race, class, and gender (Alkon 2008; Alkon 2013; Gibb and Wittman 2013; Guthman 2008; Lockie 2008; Sbicca 2012). While survey data from a number of western countries does not support the idea that organic food consumption is class or race based (Hughner et al. 2007), a number of qualitative studies point to the fact that political participation in alternative food initiatives (Guthman 2008; Alkon 2013) and in voting, volunteering, and other public aspects of civic life tends to be higher among elite social classes (Eliasoph 2013:137). Further, civil associations tend to be relatively socially homogenous and non-elite members tend to speak out less than elites within these groups (Eliasoph 2013:139). While DuPuis and Goodman (2005) and Levkoe (2011) argue that reflexive localism can reduce the social inequalities associated with local food initiatives, Lockie (2008) argues that racial inequality is "embedded in existing institutions, social practices, and geographies," and thereby reproduced, even if localism is not practiced defensively (p. 410). Lockie (2008) calls for further empirical examination of how and why some people are mobilized, while others may be excluded from AFNs (p. 413).

A small but growing number of critical food studies have taken on this task, examining the *cultural politics* of AFNs. Jackson (1991:200) defined cultural politics as "the domain in which meanings are constructed and negotiated, where relations of dominance and subordination are defined and contested." For example, Guthman's (2008) work speaks to the cultural politics of food initiatives in California by drawing attention to the ways that everyday speech and action (discourses and practices) reproduce inequality structured by race and class. A focus on cultural politics helps to explain how projects with counter-hegemonic intent can ultimately fail to challenge the dominant social order. Here, Guthman (2008) shows how the cultural politics of AFNs in California are universalizing and exclusionary. Inadvertently, discourse and practice are narrowly focused on the collective histories of white, middle class actors by ignoring the unique experiences many people of colour have with food and agriculture and the food work done by minorities and other marginalized social groups.

Drawing on critical environmental and political sociology, this chapter situates a Canadian case study in the extant discussion of whether or not the cultural politics of AFNs can be transformative. To date, the majority of critical food studies literature has been based out of the Western U.S. (eg. Guthman 2008; Allen et al. 2003; Alkon and McCullen 2011), while more positive accounts of local food movements are common in studies of central Canada (Koc et al. 2008; Levkoe 2011; Wakefield 2007). Two notable exceptions in Canada include Gibb and Wittman's (2013) study of parallel AFNs among Chinese Canadians in Metro Vancouver and Lynch and Giles' (2013) analysis of discourse in sustainable food initiatives. Overall, few studies have drawn on data from smaller urban centers or included data from both rural and urban areas. To address this debate this chapter draws on an empirical case study of an AFN that focuses on local food in Edmonton, Alberta to determine whether there is evidence of the same reproduction of power, inequality, and injustice observed in California, or the same potential for transformative success described in central Canada. I also consider the critical literature, including Guthman's (2008) analysis of the whiteness of AFNs in California and Allen's (2003) review of the changing political landscape in Californian food politics, in conjunction with positive accounts of local food movements, such as Levkoe's (2011) and Wakefield's (2007) discussion of Canadian food initiatives. This chapter scrutinizes the cultural politics of alternative food networks, using an empirical case study to address the following research question:

How and to what extent do Edmonton AFNs transform the food system?

To answer this question, this chapter draws on three key concepts from cultural and political sociology: ideology, discourse, and civic practices. Based on in-depth interviews and participant observation with farmers, entrepreneurs, government employees, educators, and community organizers**,** this chapter explores the political consciousness of actors in AFNs in order to understand the cultural politics of local food initiatives in Edmonton, AB. This sets the stage for further discussion of how discourses and civic

practices shape a cultural politics that focuses on taste and pleasure, encourages consumer-driven change to the food system, and potentially reproduces neoliberal ideology.[4]

The Cultural Politics of Alternative Food Networks

This chapter analyzes the ideologies, discourses, and civic practices of actors in in an empirical case study to explore the cultural politics of AFNs. I draw on Johnston's (2007) discursive methodological approach, recognizing that discourse can foster political engagement and focusing on "how discursive activities create, sustain, and legitimate relationships of power and privilege" (2007:233–234). Looking at ideologies, discourses, and civic practices aids our understanding of how systems of thought can define and limit the food and agriculture issues that dominate the public sphere. There is a wealth of evidence that suggests that issue identification in the public sphere will shape the civic practices used to address these issues (Johnston and Baumann 2010; Johnston, Szabo, and Rodney 2011). The driving force behind discourse and civic practices is ideology (Johnston 2007), a system of beliefs and ideas about the social world that shapes how we speak and act (Oliver and Johnston 2000). These systems of thought are rooted in norms and values about social life (Oliver and Johnston 2000). Ideology shapes discourses, which are the "broad systems of communication that link concepts together in a web of relationships" (Ferree and Merrill 2000:455). Discourses are laden with controversy and conflict, as actors are constantly debating the meaning of words and ideas (ibid). Critical discourse analysis can provide a picture of which issues are prevalent in public life and how power, ideology, and discourses are related (Fairclough 2013). Both ideologies and discourses shape civic practices, which together comprise the cultural politics of AFNs. I analyze discourse and civic practices to explore the underlying ideologies that influence the political consciousness of actors in AFNs and subsequently, shapes how they participate in food politics.

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[4] Neoliberalism is a market based political ideology that promotes deregulation, reduced government intervention and welfare, privatization, and other mechanisms of market liberalization (McClintock 2014).

Civic practices create opportunities to talk about politics and public life through the production and reproduction of etiquette that defines public engagement. Eliasoph (1996, 2011, 2013) focuses her exploration on the physical and conceptual contexts (places and situations) that make conversations about new political imaginaries possible. The physical spaces where public issues are discussed, as well as the etiquette that makes this discussion possible, are important. For instance, a physical context would be a protest or meeting where public concerns are discussed. On a conceptual level, a context that stimulates discussion of issues defined as relevant to the common good could be created implicitly, for example, by a leader steering the conversation in this direction, or explicitly, by posting discussion topics that speak to public concerns or encourage critical analysis of public life. The etiquette of these physical and discursive spaces is created through explicit and implicit rule making, group norms, and the direction provided by group leaders and power holders. Thus the way that issues are framed in public discourse and the civic practices that occur in public life are related to underlying ideologies (Johnston and Szabo 2010). I use this conceptual framework to demonstrate how ideologies, discourses, and civic practices comprise the cultural politics of AFNs.

Study Setting and Methods

This chapter analyzes a case study from Edmonton, Alberta, using 22 in-depth, semi-structured interviews and five participant observation events to compare the ideologies, discourses, and civic practices used by community organizers, farmers, entrepreneurs, educators, and policy makers to approach food system change. This research was conducted within the greater Edmonton, Alberta area, with interviews taking place up to two hours outside the city limits. I use Edmonton as shorthand to refer to this region, which includes both urban and rural settings, because the Edmonton context was the key focus of many of the interviews as well as the meetings and events I attended. Edmonton was chosen for this study because its proximity to farmland provided the opportunity to interview producers, consumers, and others and because of the recent development of municipal food policy. During study design, controversy over the annexation of the farmland to the Northeast of the city was peaking, and the city was just beginning to

develop its first food and agriculture strategy and a food council. Like many other cities in North America, food was becoming a prominent issue in municipal politics, providing a rich opportunity for exploratory inquiry into citizen engagement.

In the months before the interviews, a number of local organizations had worked to mobilize citizens to attend the municipal food and agriculture hearings, where Edmonton's city council listened to input from citizens panels and deliberated a new citywide strategy for food and agriculture. While over 500 citizens had attended the hearings (Beckie et al. 2013), many considered the outcomes to be disappointing. *Fresh: Edmonton's Food and Urban Agriculture Strategy* was implemented in 2012, yet some argued the wording was not specific enough to incite substantive changes to policy or practice. For instance, the strategy discusses how its success will be apparent when "prime farmland is protected" (p. v), yet no specific means for doing so were included in the strategy, and city council went on to approve the development of the farmland Northeast of Edmonton shortly after. Further, a key "win" from the hearings was that a food council would be formed, though activists and advocates later learned this provision had already been mandated during the most recent Municipal Development Plan in 2010 (City of Edmonton 2010:100:section 10.1.1.1). Also, given that the most productive food-growing lands are located outside the city limits, it is interesting that the strategy was titled Food and *Urban* Agriculture.

After these events, I began data collection, focusing on how and why citizens promoted change to the food system. During the hearings, Edmonton residents did engage directly with government by attending the hearings, providing feedback on the strategy, and speaking to their councilors. However, after the hearings, many began to shift their focus to alternative food projects, such as food hubs, educational programming, and community gardens. I observed how many of these projects operated primarily between civic and market spheres, without directly challenging the state or asking for their support. Further, many of these projects, whether conducted by farmers, community organizers, educators, or government employees, focused primarily on getting consumers to buy, grow, and cook more local food. While a number of scholars (Morgan 2009; Wakefield 2007) and practitioners call local food an important social movement, others have called into question whether a network that focuses almost exclusively on changing consumption patterns can

be considered a social movement at all (Goodman et al. 2011; Johnston and Szabo 2010; Lynch and Giles 2013; McIntyre and Rondeau 2011). Working on alternative food projects that encourage consumers to buy local food was common among participants, prompting me to aim to describe the cultural politics of local food activities and promote a deeper understanding of the contextual characteristics that surround contemporary citizen engagement.

To further explore civic engagement in food politics, I recruited leaders from three key sectors, which comprise alternative food networks: civil society (e.g., community organizers, educators, volunteers), the state (e.g., federal and provincial policy makers, city planners), and the market (e.g., entrepreneurs, farmers' market managers).

As this chapter compares the political consciousness of a broad range of actors who are involved in both the production and consumption of food, it moves beyond the urban-rural, producer-consumer divide that is common in food studies (Goodman et al. 2011). During each interview we discussed the projects, activities, and ideas participants were implementing and why; what their ideal food system would look like; the ways that they acted on a daily basis to achieve this goal; what changes they thought were needed to make their definition of sustainable food an obvious choice, like "falling off a log"; whether or not they felt their approach was political; and what challenges they had faced[5]. The names of participants have been changed throughout this chapter. I also observed and recorded field notes after five food focused events and meetings. At each event I noted who was speaking, what they were speaking about, what civic practices were discussed and enacted, and who was in the audience, using an observation template based on Blee's (2012) observations of civic life. The template is included here in Appendix E. The field notes created after these events were analysed along with interview transcripts using a team based, grounded theory approach and NVivo 10 software.

[5] If sustainability were like "falling off a log" it would be the easy, default option that people would choose without giving it conscious thought or effort (Hawken 1994).

Findings

Given the significant implications food and agriculture have for environmental and social justice issues, this research aimed to explore how and why people engaged in their community to promote food systems that are healthy for both people and the planet. This section summarizes the motivations, discourses, and civic practices of a range of actors in Edmonton's local food initiatives, providing insight into the ideologies and political consciousness of a range of actors in local food initiatives. This chapter provides evidence that demonstrates that while AFNs have the potential to transform the food system, they can also reproduce dominant neoliberal ideologies, through potentially universalizing discourses and civic practices that fetishize change happening through education and awareness initiatives.

Throughout the research it became clear how the dominant discourses in AFNs focused on consumer driven change to the food system by promoting reconnection, pleasure, and awareness. In Edmonton, actors had a range of goals, including improved human health, nutrition, happiness, taste, the local economy, or more rarely, social justice or environmental sustainability. During our discussions it became clear that actors recognized larger systemic problems, such as corporate control, lack of government support, and inequality. Yet these structural issues were often not the focus of their alternative food work. Instead, the majority focused on issues such as personal nutrition, the local economy, and how pleasurable and tasty local food was; all of which could be addressed through shopping, growing, cooking, and eating more local food. Their discourses were closely tied to the civic practices they used to encourage change in the food system, including educational (teaching others how to grow, preserve, or cook), demonstrative (showing ways of producing and consuming), and relational (encouraging relationships between producers and consumers) civic practices.

Although the civic practices of actors working in civil, state, and market spheres were very similar, I noted one key quantitative and qualitative difference among the groups. Farmers were much more likely to speak about the environment in considerable detail, while others used much more abstract terms or brought up the environment only in passing. While the civic practices of farmers and others were both based on encouraging

sustainable consumption, farmers were distinct in that they focused more specifically on fostering a connection with the land to achieve this goal. Actors in the other groups focused on developing awareness about food and agricultural issues among consumers by educating them about where their food came from, how tasty and pleasurable local food was, and how to shop for, cook, and grow their own local food.

If We Only Knew How to… (Re)connect

Throughout the interviews and during participant observation, a prominent frame emerged, identified earlier by Guthman (2008): if people reconnected with where their food came from and realized how pleasurable it was, they would buy more local food. This section summarizes how the participants framed local food, how they addressed barriers to local food, such as time and cost, and details who participated in the local food initiatives in this case study. Betty, a community developer who worked with a number of regional and national nutrition and food security organizations, summed up how many framed alternative food projects: "knowledge, attitude, and behaviour. You have to work on the knowledge part, it's out there, but it's the attitude toward the value of being connected to your food. We don't have it." For instance, Adam, a farmer and entrepreneur who had visited many farms around Canada, responded to my question about how he first began to change the way he ate:

> As soon as I went to a [conventional] farm and saw what I didn't want to eat. It's as simple as that. Lots of people will go to Costco and buy pork chops. If you saw how those pigs are raised, you'd never buy that product again in your life. It's as simple as that. As long as you don't know about that experience or you don't have to face that reality, you'll buy it because it's cheap. So that was it for me, visiting farms.

Although I prompted Adam to consider other factors, such as time and cost, he argued that by butchering his own meat and growing his own garden he was able to feed his family in a much cheaper and more enjoyable way than buying from Costco. However, he did admit that the reason why he had time to do so was because he was an entrepreneur who had made a job out of growing and working with food. His approach to changing the food system centered around teaching do-it-yourself food workshops and showing people

where sustainable food comes from using film, social media, and presentations. Similarly, Valerie, a agricultural policy maker and community gardener who was raised on a farm, discussed how more people needed to connect with farming, "you have to be going out and getting a little manure on your boots and getting some dirt under your fingernails." She too, focused her civic practices on educating the consumer about production by providing presentations on agricultural issues.

While attending a community garden harvest, the issue of the cost of sustainable food came up again. A woman who was picking organic tomatoes mentioned that, "this is why tomatoes cost so much at the farmers market, because of all the hard work to pick them." Those working around us agreed that the taste was much better, and someone remarked that it was "weird how cheap tomatoes are in the grocery store." The woman who brought up the tomatoes also discussed how growing up she had picked raspberries with her grandmother and really appreciated why they cost six dollars a pint at the store, because you had to fight through thorny bushes to pick them, and it takes forever. The consensus among those who spoke up seemed to be that alternative food was worth the cost and that if people knew how much work it was and how much better it tasted they would be willing to pay more. Yet it is interesting to note the context of this conversation; the community garden was the result of a partnership with inner city service agencies that worked with homeless youth and adults, and many of the gardeners were represented by the agencies. Certainly a number of those present would not be able to afford local, organic tomatoes from the farmers market, however this was not addressed in our discussion of cost. Further, prior to the community garden project, many of the gardeners likely also did not have access to garden space, transportation to a community garden, gardening knowledge, or the resources needed to grow their own.

After making these observations in the garden and comparing them with those from the other events, it became clear that a relatively homogenous group attended many of the food related events in Edmonton. The Edmonton Community Foundation reports that three out of ten Edmontonians are a visible minority (Edmonton Community Foundation 2013) and Edmonton has the second largest urban aboriginal population in Canada (DeSchutter 2012), yet at most of the food events and activities I attended, the vast majority of

attendees appeared to be white and middle class. People of colour were all but absent from many of the observation events, with one notable exception; the garden where organic tomatoes were the topic of discussion. The gardeners here were much more representative of Edmonton's demographic makeup than the other events. Soon after this observation was recorded, the members of Edmonton's Food Council were announced[6]. The twelve members were all white, and appeared to be well-educated members of the middle or upper class. Despite explicit mention in the Terms of Reference that the council was to represent "cultural groups," "demographic groups, youth, seniors, minority groups, newcomers," and "serve the public interest", the council appeared to be demographically homogenous. Overall, discussions of race, gender, or class were absent from the interviews, events, and meetings I attended, and I observed how the etiquette of these spaces fostered a cultural politics that did not encourage critical dialogue about who might be excluded.

At a number of events and meetings, the conversation was steered towards the beneficial aspects of the projects being discussed. Arguments for why alternative food was important consistently spoke to how fun, healthy, pleasurable, and economically beneficial it was. I also noted how the etiquette of these spaces was set through posted rules stating that participants should "focus on the positives" or by the way group leaders led discussions. For instance, while deliberating what their approach should be, one member of a food advisory committee remarked that, "we have to be confrontational, not polarizing. No, no, we don't want to be confrontational *or* polarizing." Shortly after this remark, the group began to hold their meetings in private. One member advised us that the group felt uncomfortable having frank discussions about controversial issues with members of the public present. At public events and meetings, conversations about potentially controversial topics such as diversity or inequality in AFNs were almost never observed. Positive education or awareness campaigns were promoted as the best way to encourage sustainable food consumption, while there was little discussion of institutional or structural barriers.

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[6] See www.edmonton.ca/city_government/documents/Edmonton_Food_Council_members.pdf for photos and biographies of the inaugural members of Edmonton's Food Council. The TOR can be found at: http://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/documents/Food_Council_-Terms_of_Reference.pdf.

Overall, the most common civic practices I observed were based in discourses of reconnection, pleasure, and awareness. Individuals in all of the groups sampled from focused on educational, demonstrative, and relational civic practices. A significant number of these civic practices were closely related to market place activities. For instance, many who focused on educational civic practices charged for the workshops they taught. Demonstrative civic practices, whether part of a not-for profit or a business, were used to show what the alternatives to the current food system were. These projects often focused on changing consumption patterns; for instance, people worked on projects such as community kitchens, indoor and outdoor gardens, farm tours, and on improving food labeling. Relational civic practices, which focus on building networks and relationships to support and promote these projects, were also common. All of these projects were framed as offering an alternative to the current food system and educating the consumer about how fun, pleasurable, and tasty alternative food was. While both farmers and members of the other groups used similar discourses and civic practices that often centered around market based activities and influencing consumption, I noted some distinct differences in the framing farmers used to discuss local food when compared with other actors in AFNs. This chapter uses these two extreme accounts to position this case study within current literature on AFNs in North America.

Farmers and the Environment: Have you ever seen a thirteen striped gopher?

The farmers I spoke with focused their civic practices around encouraging the consumer to reconnect with their food and their farmer by hosting people on farm tours and using community supported agriculture (CSA) models. While I expected that environmental degradation would be a motivator of many in AFNs, a most participants did not discuss the environmental impacts of food production or consumption, instead focusing on human health, happiness, taste, the local economy, or, rarely, social justice. Overall, farmers brought up the environment much more frequently and discussed it in much greater detail than others I interviewed or observed. This finding is notable, given the significant implications food and agriculture have for the environment (Carolan 2012) and

previous work demonstrating that consumers report choosing local food for environmental reasons (Johnston and Baumann 2010).

While touring Al's farm and checking his cattle, we discussed an off the grid retreat he had built for people to stay at while they visited. During our conversation, Al was searching for a word to explain why he had built it, when one of us offered the term "connection," which prompted him to discuss reconnection:

> That's a great term, reconnect. And that is what this is all about. Reconnecting the consumer to the land through the food. When people leave, especially if they're a family, and they say thank you, thank you, thank you. I say, that chicken you bought, when you get back to the city and cook that, remind your kids that you are helping a farm like this to make a living and to sustain itself. It's a personal connection too. It is. And it's a relationship. It's a relationship with a consumer and the farmer has a relationship with the land and we're trying to bridge that gap.

Through farm visits and CSA models, the farmers I spoke with hoped to achieve the dual purpose of encouraging people to buy food from their farms and fostering the same connection they felt with the land in others.

Although the discourses and civic practices farmers used were similar to others, in that they encouraged sustainable food consumption through connection, education, and awareness, there was one key difference in the language farmers used. They spoke about the environment more frequently but also with much more precision, offering up stories about how they had seen the land change first hand and how they had been a part of that transformation. Farmer Al had a keen eye for birds and small mammals, spotting a rare thirteen striped gopher that had only recently returned to his farm because of the native clovers and grasses he had planted. Jim, a vegetable farmer, spotted two bald eagles overhead during the interview and remarked on how unusual it was, noting that they lived in the old growth forest he had protected from encroaching development. Both Al and Jim had changed their farming practices over the years, moving towards management practices that reduced their environmental impact. As with all farmers, the environment played a central role in their daily lives, directly impacting how they made a living. Environmental stewardship was engrained in the every day discourses and civic practices of these farmers, which they used to influence the people they hosted on their farms. Underlying these practices were two competing ideologies, which Al and Jim demonstrated through their

discussions of environmental stewardship. Jim spoke about how he had resisted removing the old growth forest on his property despite significant economic incentive over the years. Al on the other hand, had collaborated with economists to calculate the economic values of the ecological goods and services his farm contributed. While environmental stewardship was a significant motivator for farmers, this value was sometimes at odds with the economic realities of farming. These competing ideologies were not as prevalent among other participants, who rarely even voiced household environmental concerns.

The Cultural Politics of Alternative Food

Interviewing and observing farmers, educators, community organizers, policy makers, and entrepreneurs allowed us to compare the political consciousness of a range of actors who participate in the cultural politics of AFNs and explore how environmental and social justice concerns were expressed in local food initiatives. As Johnston and Baumann (2010:139–140) suggest that environmental issues tend to dominate the food discourse in North America, one might expect to find that environmental issues are a significant motivator for actors in AFNs. However, the only actors that spoke extensively about the environmental impacts of food and agriculture were the farmers. This is not surprising given the daily impact the environment has on farmer's lives. Overall, other actors in Edmonton's local food initiatives rarely discussed the environment in detail, instead focusing on reconnection, awareness, and pleasure. While farmers also conformed to these dominant discourses, they were unique in that they used much greater detail when speaking about the environment than members of the other groups I interviewed. Yet, many of the farmers' civic practices were strikingly similar to those of the other participants and these civic practices and discourses were strongly rooted in market-based activities.

Overall, actors in all of the groups focused their civic practices on changing the food system through educating the consumer, demonstrating how to grow, buy, and eat better food, and connecting producers, consumers, and other AFN actors. The dominant discourses and civic practices focused on the positive aspects of alternative food and the etiquette of these activities did not encourage critical examination of power or equity

issues or consider the ways in which regulation could promote broader structural changes. Instead reconnection, as well as taste and pleasure became the focus. Similar to members of the other groups, farmers centered their civic practices on educating the consumer and developing relationships with them through marketing activities such as CSAs and farm tours. Given that none of the other interviews or participant observation events yielded data on environmental concern, there is evidence that farm visits and CSA are not enough to develop ideologies that would orient daily practices and discourses to encourage environmentally positive practices. Lacking support or sufficient opportunity to imagine, discuss, or pursue alternative approaches to food politics, farmers in AFNs rely heavily on consumers to serve as agents of change through shopping for local food.

Although building relationships, demonstrating alternatives to the current food system, and teaching people about food is a vital part of food system transformation, the findings of this research indicate one key limitation to the civic practices and discourses of eat local initiatives. With consumers positioned as the key drivers of a market based approach to food system change, environmental, and social justice issues may go unaddressed as the dominant paradigm goes unchallenged. For instance, the discourses of awareness, pleasure, and reconnection and the educational, demonstrative, and relational civic practices observed and discussed during data collection all have the potential to reproduce neoliberal ideologies. Using this political imaginary, food becomes a commodity and the marketplace is seen as the ideal locus of decisions about food and agriculture.

This chapter provided evidence that indicated how actors from different sectors focused on market based and consumer driven approaches to food system change that did not commonly engage with state or institutional actors. While farmers focused on the environmental aspects of food and agriculture more than other actors, overall there was not broad engagement among AFN actors in environmental or social justice issues. Further, I noted an etiquette that discouraged critical dialogue, did not encourage consideration of equity or social justice issues, and failed to challenge the dominant ideology of the marketplace. This observation speaks to the to the potential limitations of "voting with your fork," which can potentially exclude actors with fewer dollars and does not acknowledge farm workers, landless farmers, and other groups. Given these findings, I am

concerned that AFNs do not frame food system change in a manner that can adequately address environmental or social justice issues, thus reproducing dominant neoliberal ideology and reducing the potential for substantive changes to food and agricultural systems.

Transformative Politics or Another Bastion of White Privilege?

Given the potential for local food initiatives to reproduce dominant neoliberal ideology, we come to the question of whether or not these initiatives can be transformative and why. Exploring the cultural politics of alternative food in California, Guthman (2008) discusses the colour-blind mentalities and universalizing narratives that shape and *colour* AFNs (p. 387). Instead of asking, "Who is at the table?" Guthman (2008) encourages us to examine, "Who set the table?" questioning how the cultural politics of the food movement impacts who participates in AFNs and how (p. 388). She discusses some of the common discourses in the food movement including "if they only knew," "getting your hands in the soil" and "looking your farmer in the eye" demonstrating how many do not identify with the common narratives used to promote alternative food (p. 387). Guthman (2008) argues that this "romanticized American agrarian imagery erases the explicitly racist ways in which American land has been distributed historically" (p. 390) and ignores the food history that many people of colour have experienced. While Lockie (2013) warns that labeling AFNs as bastions of white privilege is potentially dangerous because it can trivialize the work of non-elite actors in these networks, he suggests that examining "the processes through which social inclusions and exclusions are produced" is critically important (p. 416). Keeping this in mind, this chapter aims to explain *how* the table keeps getting set this way.

Evidence of similar discourses of reconnection were found in Edmonton, yet my findings do not indicate that class and race are as polarizing as in Guthman's (2008) observations from California. Valerie's discussion of "getting your hands dirty," Adam's suggestion that visiting farms is key to changing consumption patterns, Al's discussion of reconnection, and the civic practices of farmers, are all indicative of the affirmative discourses of awareness and reconnection that were observed. While not as starkly

universalizing as those in Guthman's case study, these discourses are potentially exclusionary given the collective histories of Canada's diverse population.[7] For instance, there are a number of narratives and food histories that are excluded from the discourses of reconnection, pleasure, and awareness that dominate local food initiatives. Knowledge about and use of traditional foods among indigenous peoples has declined over the last 150 years due to a number of factors, including loss of traditional land, residential schools, and urbanization (Turner and Turner 2008). While traditional foods remain an important part of diets in many aboriginal communities (Desmarais and Wittman 2014), there are wide variations in rates of food insecurity between communities (DeSchutter 2012). An average of 7.7 percent of Canadian households experienced food insecurity in 2007 (Statistics Canada 2008), while aboriginal populations experience food insecurity three to six times higher than the average Canadian household (DeSchutter 2012). Immigrants also experience higher rates of food insecurity (DeSchutter 2012) and have diverse food histories and understandings of food and agriculture. As Guthman (2008) reminds us, "getting your hands dirty" or "looking your farmer in the eye" demonstrate reconnection to the land for some, but to others this idea brings back not so distant memories of slavery and grueling labour (p. 394). In the Canadian context, this may include residential schools, colonization, slavery, internment, land grabbing, and loss of traditional foods. For this reason, universalism is an exclusionary discourse that can impact who participates in AFNs by only appealing to a certain portion of the population.

As noted previously, many of the events, committees, and meetings I participated in did not reflect the diverse demographic makeup of the Edmonton region. The membership of Edmonton's Food Council, the key body responsible for providing advice to the city about food and agriculture, is particularly illustrative of this point. More importantly, discussions of equity, gender, race, and class were not part of the etiquette or discourse of these AFNs. Overall, I did not find public spaces where people could critically examine power relations or question whether the existing framing of food politics addressed

[7] Guthman (2008) describes how discourses in AFNs in California can be universalizing and exclusionary, as they tend speak to the collective histories of white, middle class actors, assuming that this framing appeals universally to all actors and ignoring the unique experiences many people of colour have with food and agriculture.

them. This lack of critical public dialogue is significant, given the findings of other scholars who note that AFNs have been slow to address white privilege and class inequality (Alkon and McCullen 2010; Slocum 2007; Slocum 2010). These observations corroborate Eliasoph's (2013) and Johnston and Baumann's (2010) conclusion that participation in civic life tends to be dominated by elites and that discourse is often shaped by the ideologies of those who have greater access to cultural and economic capital. Although the AFNs in Edmonton may not be the bastions of white privilege that some describe, because of the lack of critical examination of power relations, they are also not as transformative as central Canadian scholars suggest. While possibility remains that there are parallel food networks populated by visible minorities, marginalized, or non dominant groups, such as those observed by Gibb and Wittman (2013) in British Columbia, these findings are troubling given the potential for elites to increase their social and economic capital through participation in AFNs, potentially reproducing and perpetuating existing inequality.

Currently, AFNs are well positioned to work within the neoliberal ideologies of the marketplace, which allows them to make use of significant amounts of cultural and economic capital. In a capitalist model, focusing on how pleasurable and tasty local food can be is a good for the market. However, focusing on market and civil activities, without engaging the state or challenging institutional barriers may not always be desirable. This chapter suggests that the cultural politics of AFNs are potentially exclusionary and individualizing, in that they do not address power relations or engage a broad range of actors in promoting environmental sustainability, which brings in to question the effectiveness of such frames. The discourses and civic practices that structure AFNs seem to preclude any critical examination of power relations, foster a belief that the individual consumer is the most appropriate location for social change, and that shifting intransigent eating practices is a matter of education and awareness. AFNs in Edmonton have been successful in many ways, and have encouraged a large number of citizens to participate in the food and agriculture hearings and provided new opportunities to purchase, cook, and grow local food. However, my concern is that AFNs may not adequately develop the skills and civic practices necessary to tackle issues beyond the market sphere or develop a broad membership from the region they operate in.

Conclusion

Using contrasting accounts of the significance and success of alternative food networks to situate a case study from a Canadian city, this chapter explored the cultural politics of these networks and aimed to address whether or not food politics in Edmonton are as dangerous as empirical studies from western California suggest or as transformative as scholars from central Canada conclude. This chapter demonstrated how discourses of reconnection, pleasure, and awareness and civic practices that focus on education, building networks, and demonstrating alternatives to the current system shape a cultural politics that places the locus for social change in the marketplace, potentially reproducing neoliberal ideology, and failing to adequately address the implications of food and agriculture for environmental degradation or social justice. By showing the lack of critical examination of the power relations in AFNs, this chapter challenged the idea that the current framing of food politics was sufficient for significant transformation to the food system. Given their limitations, we are left with the question as to whether the current tactics of AFNs can foster a more just and sustainable food system.

While this case study has important implications for AFNs, as the goals and activities of the AFN members observed here were very similar to those observed in other AFNs, there are also lessons here for other movements. A number of environmental social movements also place a strong focus on education, undertaking awareness campaigns that encourage people to take action based on their knowledge of environmental issues (Kollmuss and Agyeman 2002). For instance, the environmental movement has spent a significant amount of effort focusing on changing behaviour by spreading awareness about climate change, yet the "lexicon of ABC [attitude, behaviour, change] does not contain within it the terms and concepts required to discuss or debate significant societal transformation" (Shove 2010:1277). Like AFNs, climate change politics also place a strong emphasis on the role of the citizen-consumer. While over 8 out of 10 Western Canadians believe climate change is a significant issue (Berdahl 2008), significant changes to policy or practice have not yet been realized. By focusing on education and behaviour, parts of the

environmental movement may also fail to adequately address social change or transformation.

While there were a number of potential challenges within AFNs in Edmonton, there were also a number of strengths that could be further developed to form a movement that adequately addresses power and justice. For instance, educational civic practices could be harnessed to provided anti-racism training, build models of collective action, and teach conflict resolution. The strong relational focus could help AFNs extend outside of their current membership, engaging a broader range of actors. Instead of just demonstrating alternatives to the current system, critical discussions about how these alternatives might work with, against, and beyond the current system could be facilitated. Given that rates of urbanization are projected to increase to over seventy percent by 2050 (United Nations 2012), AFNs could also explore new ways to develop environmental concern in both urban and rural settings and among producers, consumers, and others. Overall, there are many opportunities for AFNs to transform the food system. By offering a critique of AFNs I do not intend to encourage those interested in change to abandon the project. Instead, I suggest that rather than focusing on encouraging consumers to buy local food by promoting awareness, reconnection, and pleasure, speaking publicly about the limitations, barriers, and conflicts of AFNs may constitute a more effective politics. Instead of creating an alternative system that operates comfortably within the current one, perhaps it is imperative that we first consider how the issues with food and agriculture came about in the first place: "it is time to step back, think and *say* the right thing. True, we often talk about something instead of doing it; but sometimes we also do things in order to avoid talking and thinking about them" (Žižek 2009:11).

Chapter Three

"I'm an Advocate, not an Activist": Distinguishing between food movements and communities of practice in Edmonton a case study of alternative food networks

Abstract

Many accounts of alternative food networks (AFNs) position them as a diverse assemblage of actors that have developed into a cohesive and politically significant social movement. Others are more cautious, questioning whether a collection of special interest groups that do not directly challenge existing power relations, rely heavily on consumers to create change through ethical purchasing decisions, and do not focus on social justice truly comprises a social movement. This chapter takes up this debate by examining the frames, strategies, and activities that constitute daily practices of key leaders in AFNs in Edmonton, Alberta, drawing on interviews and participant observation with actors in local food initiatives. These empirical findings indicate that while many members of local food initiatives in Edmonton focus on remedying the perceived disconnect between consumers and their food and presenting alternatives to current systems, few focus their strategies or activities on resistance by engaging with the state and other institutions to promote structural change. Comparing these Canadian results to literature on La Vía Campesina, a food sovereignty movement, and noting the differences in frames, strategies, and activities, provides the framework for a discussion of whether the label "communities of practice" might more accurately reflect the activities of local food networks.

Key words: food politics; social movements; communities of practice; advocacy; activism; citizenship

Introduction

In the context of food and agriculture, alternative food networks (AFNs) have been characterized by scholars and foodies as empowering and transformative social movements that have the potential to remedy social and ecological issues in the food system (Koc et al. 2008; Levkoe 2011; Morgan 2009; Wakefield 2007). These initiatives are said to reduce the environmental impact of food production and consumption, invigorate the local economy, support small farmers, and provide eaters with access to tastier and healthier food (Goodman, Dupuis, and Goodman 2013). AFNs have been deemed "one of the most important social movements of the early twenty-first century in the global north" in light of their ability to create more sustainable cities (Morgan 2009). However, other scholars have questioned whether a network of individuals and groups that focus almost exclusively on changing consumption patterns can be considered a social movement at all (Johnston and Szabo 2010; Lynch and Giles 2013; McIntyre and Rondeau 2011). For instance, Goodman, DuPuis, & Goodman (2011) suggest that AFNs may be more accurately described as communities of practice rather than social movements (p. 51). Drawing on a case study of alternative food networks in Edmonton, and in comparison with a global food sovereignty movement, this chapter works towards a theoretical typology of AFNs. This chapter will engage a critical question in the food studies literature: can eat-local movements foster transformative social change?

Given the potential for social movements to foster critical dialogue about broader societal issues, promote structural change, and encourage people to rethink the roles of states and institutions, they have become an important topic of scholarly debate and critique in terms of their ability to promote social transformation across a range of sectors, including the food system (Haenfler, Johnson, and Jones 2012). Extant literature explores the effectiveness of movement tactics (Gamson 1992; Johnson et al. 2010; Tarrow 2011; Tindall, Davies, and Mauboulès 2003), their models of organization (Cohen 1985; Diani and Bison 2004; Szasz 2009), and their potential for inciting societal transformation (Hinrichs 2003; Passy and Monsch 2014; Raynolds 2000; Stevenson et al. 2007). While the sociological social movement literature has historically largely focused on labour, environmental, or women's movements, social mobilization in the food and agriculture

sector is increasingly prominent.[8] Given numerous of examples that demonstrate how social movements can effectively promote widespread changes to social and political systems (Gamson 1992; Tarrow 2011), questioning whether alternative food initiatives comprise a social movement is important for both theory and practice in food studies.

Currently, the literature on alternative food initiatives is inconsistent, variously classifying mobilization around food and agriculture as movements (Friedland 2010; Morgan 2009; Wakefield 2007), networks (Levkoe 2013), or more rarely and recently, communities of practice (Goodman et al. 2011). Those characterizing AFNs as social movements often base this conclusion on the increasing prevalence of a broad range of alternative food initiatives such as farmers markets, organic farms, and reskilling projects; the number of people involved in alternative food; and the new awareness of and changes to consumption patterns that are associated with such activities (Morgan, 2009; Wakefield, 2007). Others, who critique AFNs for their connection to the market, suggest that they tend to be compliant with neoliberal ideology, providing additional sources of food and thus taking the place of former social safety nets, thereby obfuscating resistance to state rollbacks and placing new responsibilities on individuals and communities (Allen and Guthman 2006; Guthman 2008; Pudup 2008). Following this logic, such projects cannot be considered movements because they do not directly challenge the dominant paradigm or encourage resistance to hegemonic institutions. Overall, there is a significant amount of speculation about how and to what extent AFNs may constitute social movements. Yet, there has been little rigorous theoretical and empirical work that considers the implications of this possibility or seriously considers alternative labels. Taking up this debate, I ask:

1. How and to what extent do the discourses, strategies, and activities of local food initiatives in Edmonton fit with scholarly definitions of social movements?

To answer these questions, I develop a theoretical framework focusing on the frames, strategies, and activities used by actors to promote change in the food system. I use this

[8] For instance, Barndt (2010) discusses the interplay between gender and agriculture.

framework to consider similarities and differences between local food initiatives in Edmonton, Alberta and La Vía Campesina, a global food sovereignty movement. I chose an example of a global food sovereignty movement because "food sovereignty proponents seek fundamental social change, a transformation of society" and the movement can be understood as an "organizing theme for transformative social change" (Desmarais and Wittman 2014:4). This analysis of Edmonton food initiatives is based on primary data collection, which is supplemented by a literature review of La Vía Campesina. I draw from scholarship on social movements and communities of practice citizenship to develop a continuum that encompasses communities of practice and social movements, situating the Edmonton food initiatives and global food sovereignty work along the continuum.

A Continuum of Civic Engagement: From social movement to community of practice

Over the past few decades, social movements have been explored theoretically using a number of different frameworks, including Resource Mobilization (RM), Political Opportunity (PO), New Social Movement (NSM), and more recently Political Process Theory (PPT). New social movements focus on collective identity, democracy, and collective action (Cohen 1985). These social movements successfully bring together diverse networks of individuals and groups, using collective identity to foster coalitions and develop collective action frames to engage in political or cultural conflict (Diani and Bison 2004; Diani 1992:13). Social movements are sustained via social networks, which build individual and collective identities through socialization, provide opportunities for individuals to engage with issues that are important to them, and influence individual preferences to encourage people to join the movement (Passy 2001).

A significant body of literature is devoted to understanding how social networks contribute to social movements (Krinsky and Crossley 2014; Passy 2001; Saunders 2007). This relational approach to understanding social movements emphasizes the importance of social networks in fostering coordination and collaboration among movement members, contributing to social capital, and providing opportunities for meaning making and collective identity building (Krinsky and Crossley 2014). Social movements use collective

goals and methods (Szasz 2009), which focus on widespread social change, altering the dominant paradigm, resisting hegemony, and influencing public discourse (Tarrow 2011).

In contrast, a community of practice is a group of people with similar interests and knowledge, who engage in similar activities (Wenger and Snyder 2000). Communities of practice aim to create opportunities for collective learning and shared knowledge. They are "groups of people who share a concern or passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (Wenger 2004:1). These communities are defined by three key characteristics; the members have a similar area of interest, they develop a community by sharing information and activities, and they have similar practices (Wenger and Snyder 2000). These shared practices are made up of common resources, experiences, narratives, and problem solving approaches (ibid). Overall, communities of practice focus their activities on developing and promoting best practices and relationships among practitioners. For instance, the World Bank developed communities of practice to establish the organization as a global bank of economic knowledge (Wenger and Snyder 2000). These communities of practice "solve problems, develop new ideas, and build relationships among peers who share a common passion" (Wenger and Snyder 2000). While these characteristics are similar to those of social movements, there are key distinctions between the two labels, in that social movements focus on structural and institutional changes, while communities of practice focus on one specific problem within a smaller group or organization. This paper provides greater insight into these labels, comparing an empirical case study of AFNs in Edmonton with a global food sovereignty movement to situate AFNs along a continuum from social movements to communities of practice.

To provide guidance for a comparison of social movements and communities of practice, I employ Stevenson, Ruhf, Lezberg, and Clancy's (2007) framework, which describes three key roles taken on by social movement actors. According to Stevenson et al. (2007), social movements are made up of weavers, builders, and warriors. Weavers create cohesive networks and foster a collective identity among social movement actors, while builders provide alternatives to the current system, demonstrating what might occur if the movement achieves their goals for social change. Warriors contribute by addressing structural barriers to change, engaging with the state and institutional actors through

protest and activism. This framework is similar to that developed by Allen et al. (2003), whose study of shifting goals among agri-food initiatives in California revealed that over the last 30 years these activities had become increasingly focused on offering an alternative to, instead of opposing, the current system. Others, including Hinrichs' (2003) study of the politics and practices of food system localization in Iowa and Raynolds' (2000) study of organic and fair trade movements, pose similar questions, considering how these change-focused activities result in substantive societal transformation. Similar frameworks have also been used beyond food studies, including Perlas' (2000) exploration of resistance to globalization, which highlights how civil society, state, and market actors can work together to create societal change.

While both social movements and communities of practice have weavers and builders, who focus on collective identity formation and create alternatives to the current system (in social movements), and foster relationships and promote best practices (in communities of practice), within this framework warriors are positioned solely within social movements, who challenge the dominant paradigm by engaging with state and institutional actors. Communities of practice do not require warriors to do their work, as they focus on promoting best practices and relationships within a group that already has similar interests and ideas, and offering an alternative poised to complement, rather than overthrow, hegemonic institutions. This chapter considers and develops Stevenson et al.'s (2007) framework to understand how and to what extent AFNs constitute social movements. To do so, I analyze interview and observational data to evaluate how actors frame substantive issues, which strategies they employ or consider employing to address these issues, and which activities they participate in to promote food system change.

This chapter focuses on framing, strategies, and activities because they are common criteria used to identify social movements in the literature (Benford and Snow 2000; Ferree and Merrill 2000; Gillan 2008; Oliver and Johnston 2000; Stevenson et al. 2007). As local food initiatives have been characterized in the literature (Morgan 2009; Wakefield 2007), popular media, and discourse as a food *movement,* I apply these criteria (frames, strategies, activities) to evaluate an empirical example of a local food initiative and meta-analysis of a global food initiative. My evaluation focuses on how and to what extent the

local and global cases fit established definitions of a social movement. I broaden the comparative scope by introducing literature on communities of practice. This term was recently applied to local food initiatives in passing (Goodman et al. 2011), however this idea has not been explored in detail in the literature. I draw upon definitions of frames, strategies, and activities to construct a continuum of civic engagement, which captures communities of practice and social movements, and situates the empirical and meta-analytic case studies within this continuum.

Frames are used to articulate the problems that collective actors focus on, thus shaping the strategies and activities that are used to address those problems. They articulate the overarching collective values that provide a basis for the strategies and activities of groups (Rucht and Neidhardt 2002). Frames are, "action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization" (Benford and Snow 2000:614). Communities of practice frame their work in terms of a specific problem that is relevant to a specific group, community, or organization (Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder 2002). While they are not strictly defined geographically, communities of practice do focus on localized issues within a community embedded in an organization. This framing emphasizes the ways that group activities and relationships can be used to improve practices and create more effective organization (Brown and Duguid 1991). Contrastingly, social movements have broader, often national or international concerns (Cohen 1985). They use collective action frames to engage a heterogeneous group of movement actors from multiple communities and often, multiple countries, intersecting race, class, and gender, and placing a strong focus on justice (Oliver and Johnston 2000). While not all social movements frame problems in the same way, many movements focusing on social or political change use injustice frames (Benford and Snow 2000; Gamson 1992).

Frames are used to create strategies for action within both communities of practice and social movements. The strategies are used to create identity, determine which tactics to use, how to organize, and where to engage (Cohen 1985; Oliver and Johnston 2000). Social movements place a strategic focus on solidarity, engaging a broad group by developing collective identities (Rucht and Neidhardt 2002). Because movement actors

focus on framing problems as structural, they strategically focus on developing collective action frames to address the problem (Rucht and Neidhardt 2002). Integral to most social movements is a strong strategic emphasis on human rights (Gamson 1992). This emphasis on both rights and responsibilities is a key distinction from other forms of citizenship, such as ecological citizenship which places a stronger emphasis on responsibilities (Dobson 2003). While communities of practice build a community of interest among individuals who share practices and ideas, unlike social movements they do not place a strategic focus on rights. Instead, they focus on their responsibility to fix a problem within the organization or group, strategically developing best practices and sharing them in order to fix the problem (Wenger and Snyder 2000). By focusing on developing practices to address a specific problem, communities of practice may not inherently address the root cause of a problem and may not engage beyond their community, instead developing strategies to reduce the symptoms or create an alternative approach within the organization in which they are working.

Strategies are expressed through the activities and practices of actors in social movement and communities of practice. In communities of practice, the general focus of group activities is on developing and distributing best practices (Wenger and Snyder 2000). These communities build relationships and work together to develop problem solving approaches, finding common ground and creating allies to ensure best practices are transmitted inwardly, among the organization or its surrounding community (ibid). The activities of social movements are organized around cultural and political protest, which engages state and institutional actors to promote social and political changes (Cohen 1985; Oliver and Johnston 2000; Rucht and Neidhardt 2002; Stevenson et al. 2007). Movement actors engage in networking and build relationships to encourage solidarity and collective identity (Rucht and Neidhardt 2002). Like communities of practice, there is a focus on educating members; however they are also more outward looking, focusing on informing the general public about the root causes of social problems and what collective tactics can be used to address them, developing political skills, and discussing or creating new paradigms (Casas-Cortés, Osterweil, and Powell 2008). While the frames, strategies, and activities of social movements and communities of practice are distinct, I do not see them

as mutually exclusive categories. Instead, the two can be conceptualized as ends of a continuum.

While both communities of practice and social movements place a strong focus on networking and social learning, communities of practice emphasize establishing and sharing best practices among a group with similar interests and activities (Wenger and Snyder 2000). These communities find common ground and create new allies to promote best practices (Wenger and Snyder 2000), however they do not inherently challenge the dominant paradigm or focus on broad societal change. Thus the members of a community of practice tend to be relatively homogeneous in that they share similar interests and practices (Wenger and Snyder 2000). In contrast, social movements are often made up of heterogeneous actors who share a common goal (Cohen 1985; Diani 1992), but use varied tactics to promote change (Johnson et al. 2010). The distinguishing features of social movements is that they focus on the rights and responsibilities of citizens who participate in them, offer a critique of institutional barriers, consider the state's role in social change, focus on justice, and directly engage with institutional barriers to encourage change (Stevenson et al., 2007). This chapter conceptualizes social movements and communities of practice as two points on the ends of a continuum, with various networks, initiatives, and groups positioned along the spectrum, depending on which frames, strategies, and activities they employ.

A Global Food Sovereignty Movement: La Vía Campesina

La Vía Campesina is considered one of most politically significant "transnational agrarian movements," providing an example of a food movement against which to compare the empirical findings from Edmonton (Borras 2008:172). La Vía Campesina is a grassroots, international coalition of individuals, groups, and organizations from over 70 countries worldwide that promotes rural livelihoods, food sovereignty, and small-scale agriculture. The organization focuses on solidarity and collective identity, supporting a diverse group of rural dwellers, landless peasants, women, and youth from across the globe. Although these groups alone do not have a strong voice at the national or

international level, together they have become a leading chorus that speaks out against neoliberal globalization in agriculture (Borras 2008; Desmarais 2008; Wittman 2009).

La Vía Campesina challenges the dominant discourses surrounding development and agriculture, framing their struggle as justice and sovereignty based, focusing on the rights of rural and landless peoples worldwide (Wittman 2009). Calling for a new form of modernity, wherein people have the right to decide their own agricultural and ecological practices and define their own livelihoods, La Vía Campesina rejects the neoliberal agenda of development organizations and encourages agrarian citizenship (Wittman 2009). With a strong focus on global solidarity and collective action, the movement engages with state and other institutional actors to promote policy change and agrarian reform (Torrez 2011). While La Vía Campesina was created in 1993, it took significant time and effort for the group to gain international attention (Borras 2008). The movement has framed the issues as global and rights-based from the outset, focusing on "food sovereignty, healthy food and protection of Mother Earth as arguments in favour of agrarian reform" (Rosset 2013:735). They frame the problems associated with agriculture as caused by neoliberal globalization.

La Vía Campesina has developed a strategic focus on eight key areas: agrarian reform and water; biodiversity and genetic resources; food sovereignty and trade; human rights; women; migrations and rural workers; sustainable peasant's agriculture; and youth (La Vía Campesina, 2011). Over fifty-percent of members reside in Latin America; however, there are strong groups located in Asia and Western Europe and the group tends to have a strong Latin-American influence (ibid). Members come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds, including landless peasants as well as larger landowners, which means members do not always agree on policy issues (ibid). While members come from a wide variety of ideological backgrounds, the group has been able to maintain a united front internationally up to this point by focusing on solidarity and common identity (Borras, 2008). A strong focus on rights and justice has allowed them to bridge the divide between the global north and south, by strategically maintaining a discourse that transcends state boundaries and allows for internal debate among the citizens involved. Despite significant geographical and ideological differences among members, La Vía Campesina has built cross-border solidarity and collective identity, recognizing that this work is an ongoing and

important part of encouraging transformative social change (Borras 2008; Desmarais 2008).

La Vía Campesina has applied these frames and strategies using a number of tactics and activities. One of they strengths of La Vía Campesina has been its ability to organize colourful protests simultaneously across the globe and to craft strategic alliances with non-governmental organizations and other social movements (Desmarais 2008). Together they present a unified message of solidarity, increasing international attention to the policy and procedural issues the group raises at international forums such as the United Nations, World Bank, and the Food and Agricultural Organization (Rosset 2013). While a large number of La Vía Campesina members do not own land, they are not excluded from citizenship under this conceptualization, as agrarian citizenship expresses both the rights and responsibilities of citizens, leading to new understandings of resistance (Hannah Wittman 2009). The movement emphasizes and exercises that their rights to "dissent, organize, associate, assemble, protest and build alternatives" must be upheld (Rosset 2013). Examples of the warriors, builders, and weavers Stevenson et al. (Stevenson et al., 2007) discuss are all found within the movement. A network of actors (weavers) works to promote solidarity and collective identity among members (Borras 2008; Desmarais 2008). Other members (builders) work to demonstrate how policy reform could take place, presenting alternatives to the current system and demonstrating new forms of land ownership and management (Wittman 2009). Finally, a key pillar of La Vía Campesina are the warriors, who organize protests across the globe and critique institutions with the hopes of inciting policy change and agrarian reform (Borras 2008; Desmarais 2008; Rosset 2013).

The literature on La Vía Campesina provides an example of a change-focused group that has been internationally recognized as a social movement with the potential for creating transformative social change. While I do not offer it up as an ideal type, as the meanings of food sovereignty and food system transformation vary depending on which group uses the term, this example does provide a useful tool for comparison, which provides the opportunity to contrast the frames, strategies, and activities of a food movement with those in an empirical case study.

Methods

To situate an empirical example of a local food initiative on a continuum between social movement and community of practice, I draw on data from 22 in-depth, semi-structured interviews and participant observation with actors in the greater Edmonton area. Participants were recruited by distributing flyers at food events and through the online listservs, Facebook, and Twitter accounts of food and agriculture organizations. I also contacted some participants directly, based on knowledge of their involvement in promoting food systems that were healthy for both people and the planet. I aimed to create a sample that included individuals from the state (e.g,. Federal and Provincial policy makers, city planners), civil society (e.g., community organizers, educators, volunteers), and the market (e.g., entrepreneurs, farmers market managers). Interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 3 hours and took place throughout the greater Edmonton area, up to two hours outside city limits. During the interviews, we discussed what the participants thought an ideal food system would look like, how they were going about reaching that ideal, and whether or not they felt their approach was political and why. Throughout the interview process, I also attended five food focused events and meetings, noting who attended, who was speaking, and what people spoke about. I attended a work bee at a community garden that served inner city residents, a meeting that discussed the potential for the development of a food hub, a community consultation for a university led urban agriculture project, a networking event for people interested in sustainable food, and a meeting of a citizens advisory panel discussing food and agriculture. I recorded field notes after each event and analyzed these observations along with the interview transcripts.

Each interview was professionally transcribed, doubled checked by the interviewer, and then analysed using qualitative data organization software (NVivo 10) software. Interviews and field notes were analyzed on an ongoing basis by each member of the research team and then compared and triangulated to ensure rigour (Houghton et al. 2013). Accordingly, I refined the research objectives and interview questions throughout the process, based on previous findings from interviews and observation (Corbin and Strauss 2008). In this paper I use a literature review of a food movement to compare the

frames, strategies, and activities that were discussed and observed during data collection, allowing us to explore the potential that local food initiatives have for fostering transformative social change and question where they fit along a continuum that spans social movements and communities of practice.

A Local Food Initiative: Edmonton, Alberta

In order to determine where the local food initiative I studied falls on the theoretical continuum between community of practice and social movement, I analyse the frames, strategies, and activities that were discussed during the interviews and observed during data collection. I use civic practices as a sensitizing concept, to explore how local food initiatives frame food and agricultural issues in the public sphere, which strategies they used to tackle the issues, and which activities and practices they used to do so. This section articulates three key findings. First, the alternative food networks I studied largely frame the issues with food and agriculture as stemming from the perceived disconnect between consumers and food as well as those who grow it, which is manifested in personal and community health issues. Second, these initiatives place a strategic focus on teaching consumers about the importance of local food, reconnecting consumers with farmers and with food, and focusing on positive projects that have tangible results. Finally, I demonstrate how the activities and practices of actors in local food initiatives emphasize expanding opportunities for local food production and consumption through farm visits, workshops, community supported agriculture (CSA), networking events, and demonstration sites.

Framing: We are disconnected from our food

Participants in civil, state, and market spheres framed their motivations for participating in local food initiatives as trying to improve human health, nutrition, taste, happiness, or less frequently, social justice or environmental concern. They problematized

the perceived disconnect between consumers and food, emphasizing the negative impact this disconnection had on personal and community health, happiness, nutrition, and sometimes, on the environment or for social justice. While broader social or environmental concerns, such as chemical use in agriculture or food security were touched on in most of the interviews, only a few of the actors I spoke with or observed made these issues a major part of their argument for local food. Instead, most participants focused on the ways that local food could invigorate the local economy, and how eating, shopping for, and growing more local food could improve health and wellness. The way the problem is framed (as disconnection) is related to the strategies and activities that actors used to promote food system change.

When I asked Betty, a community organizer who worked with a number of food security focused organizations, how she chose which projects to work on, she responded:

> Well I guess what I agree to be a part of is a place where I think I can try to help people understand to do things around food that connects people to their land, food and water in a way that doesn't hurt the land and doesn't hurt animals and is positive for human beings.

Again, she focuses on how food can be used as a connector, discussing how food can be used to build community because it is fun and pleasurable:

> And so we learned that relationships, actions, food and fun are the pillars of anything that happens in the community.

Betty emphasizes how sharing meals can be used to build community and also how important it was to connect people with where their food comes from and how it was grown. She explicitly positioned herself as a food advocate, describing her work as that of a connector. Similarly, when I asked Robin, who started a farmers market and a food advocacy organization, about why it was important to act at a community level, she described how the industrial food system disconnected people from where their food comes from and how it is grown:

> I've always seen the industrial food system as very disconnected from food. It produces a lot of food, but really is it concerned with food? I don't think it is…I think it's ludicrous that we aren't paying more attention to the flavour of the food, the nutrition of the food, the people who cook the food, all these kind of things.

Robin discussed how disconnected shopping in a large grocery store made her feel and how her generation (early twenties) was not very connected with food production or cooking:

> So, like, my generation I think a lot of people feel is just like we're disconnected from this food ideal, I mean, looking back at our grandparents wishing that they taught us this, right, but … A lot of us missed out on that.

Those working in civil, state, and market spheres all emphasized the negative implications of the perceived disconnect between consumers and food. For instance, when I asked him how he began to change his farming practices from conventional grain farming to holistic pasture management, Al, who raised a variety of animals for direct sale and regularly hosted farm tours, told me how he first began to change when he was diagnosed with a disease and his doctor advised him to eat pasture raised meat. He went on to discuss how he aimed to reconnect himself as well as consumers with healthy food and how this not only improved his livelihood, but that of the community, by contributing to the local economy. This framing ultimately shaped the strategies and activities these actors focused on, which emphasized how local food could reconnect eaters with how their food was grown, who grew it, and how this could improve their health and happiness.

Strategies: "I'm an advocate, not an activist"

Given that AFN leaders focused on how the perceived disconnect between consumers and food had negative implications on human and community health and happiness, they tended to place a strategic emphasis on reconnection through networking, education, and awareness campaigns. They strategically positioned their work as that of the advocate, emphasizing how activists were often disconnected from the realities of food and agriculture. During observation, I noted how groups accentuated the positive aspects of local food: "focus on what is possible," "what are some success stories?," concentrating on how reconnecting people with how their food was produced and who grew it could create positive change in the food system.

While initially this study began with a broader focus on alternative food networks, recruiting participants in the greater Edmonton area who were involved in their communities to promote food systems that were healthy for both people and the planet, it soon became clear that there was a very strong emphasis on local food in the Edmonton region. Among the AFN leaders I spoke with and observed, promoting local food was articulated as integral to reconnecting consumers with their food and the people who grow it. The perceived disconnect between consumers and food production was problematized by all actors, regardless of whether they were primarily engaged in civil, state, or market spheres. For instance, when Andy, a city employee and I were discussing food politics, he said:

> [Food] almost touches everything. I think when you put food in the center of the conversation, whatever the conversation may be, you quickly find how everything can relate to it and how everyone can relate to those things that are connected to food. It's pretty powerful that way.

This quote illustrates how food is seen as the ultimate connector; a way to reconnect consumers with how their food was grown, a way to connect people in a community, and a way to connect people with farmers.

Overall, promoting local food was articulated as a responsibility: citizen-consumers ought to support local farmers and local economies, as well as personal and community health and wellness. Local solutions to reconnect consumers with their food were emphasized by all of the participants I interviewed and were a prominent part of the events and activities I observed. Actors working in the state, market, and civil society spheres all focused their attention on these local initiatives. Even John and Valerie, who worked for the Provincial and Federal levels of government, described the unique opportunities for food system change at the local level. John discussed how government could play the role of catalyst in promoting sustainable food, yet he felt that municipal and regional governments were better suited to take on this role, due to their proximity to the community. However, this discussion of the role of government was not a common one. Instead, the onus was placed on local residents to shop for, grow, and eat more local food.

While most of the people interviewed agreed that food itself was political, the majority were reluctant to call their own food work political. Given the insistence of a

number of authors that local food initiatives can be considered social movements, I tried to recruit people who identified as activists. However, the vast majority of participants self-identified as food advocates instead. For instance, Betty did not feel she was an activist or involved in politics, despite her association with a large number of food security and nutrition organizations at the local and national levels. Many described how activists were disconnected from the food system. Nicole, an entrepreneur who identified herself as an *advocate*, offered her definition of the term in response to my question regarding whether or not she perceived her work to be political:

> I think one of the key differences between advocacy and activism is the way we might articulate ourselves… I think there is a very thick layer of people who are working in the food system for a very thin layer of farmers. We're not deeply connected to production and we are disconnected from the realities of it, yet we are acting on their behalf. I think a lot of activism is happening at the furthest reach of what's happening at the production level and that's a very poor form of change because it's not looking at the full context.

Nicole grew up on a farm and had worked with producers prior to starting her business. She described activists as disconnected from the realities of farming and went on to describe why advocacy is her preferred method of participating in civic life:

> Activism in the food system is a little bit broken and I'm concerned about it. I would just love to see activists who are turning around and creating programs and projects and proposals. That sounds so bureaucratic, but just put an idea out there and not just a complaint.

Nicole's views on advocacy were reflected in her work, which focused on marketing local food to consumers. Like many of the others participants, entrepreneurial approaches were a key part of her strategy for changing the food system.

The general attitude towards activism seemed to be that it was disregarded as an activity of special interest groups. This point was is illustrated by Valerie's (an employee of the Federal Government) response when I asked her if she considered her work to be political;

The protest thing again, I think there are better ways to use your effort and energy. Again, some of these organized groups have done a survey or petition thing and if political leaders are willing to listen to their masses and their public, then that's great. If they single it out and say that's just a special interest group, you're screwed. It's really sad because sometimes those special interest groups are far more organized and far more informed

than anybody ever will be. If they could just find a way to break down the communication barriers and share the information with one another and improve it, but they get into these little bun fights, well big bun fights, and it's like well, no matter what he says I'm not going to listen to him, or her.

Here, Valerie describes how protestors are often painted as special interest groups, which can be discredited in the public eye. Instead of engaging in politics or protest, the focus of Edmonton's local food initiatives was on alternative projects and lifestyles that explicitly did not set out to challenge the dominant paradigm or question the root causes of environmental degradation or social injustice in the food system. Many working on these projects discussed how they intentionally avoided engaging with state or other institutional actors. They deliberately avoided confronting government regulations or broad institutional barriers to food system change and positioned their work as non-radical. Instead they focused on positive projects, which could create more opportunities to produce and consume local food, with the hopes that these activities would reconnect people with where their food came from and who produced it. While some, such as farmer Grant questioned whether these market or lifestyle-based approaches to food system change are adequate, overall I was unable to locate many participants who identified their strategy as that of an activist.

Activities: We just need education

Whether it was through community supported agriculture models, selling preserves from gleaned fruit, labeling local food, staring farmers markets, or teaching food skill workshops, a significant number of actors participated in market-based activities to promote food system change. The most common activities of reconnection that people engaged in centered around building a network of groups and individuals who were interested in alternative food (relational civic practices), providing education about alternative production and consumption (educational civic practices), and demonstrating alternative modes of production and consumption (demonstrative civic practices). These activities often took place in the intersection between civil society and the marketplace, with people selling or providing free workshops, marketing and labeling local food, or

providing education about sustainable agriculture through community supported agriculture or farm tours. Very few of the participants discussed engaging with the state or other institutions at all, instead focusing their efforts on civil society and market-based projects. When we discussed what things he did on a daily basis that he thought contributed to changing the food system, Grant described how he was not very involved in the community until he started a farm modeled on community supported agriculture (CSA):

> I'm still pretty lame and I don't know if it's an excuse or not but I find my activism is my life and for me to drive in for an hour to go to the Legislature and protest… I'm very aware politically of all the issues about globalization and human rights and social justice and I know what's going on in the Middle East probably more than the average person. But I rarely justify driving all the way to go do something. So I feel a bit bad about that in some ways but the other hand it's just like, I'm here doing what I do and that's enough for me really.

While he was able to speak to global food and agricultural issues such as globalization and social justice, Grant acted primarily at a local level, focusing on his own farming practices and on working with the local community through a CSA.

One of the questions I asked each participant was what their ideal food system would look like and what they would do to reach that vision if they had unlimited resources. Meredith, a market manager who also worked for the government and volunteered for a number of food focused organizations, described how she would quit her second job and just work at the farmers market, "then I would probably buy a building and turn it into a food co-op." Stephanie, who had started a number of community gardens and managed a community orchard, described how she would like to see more education for children:

> I have often thought that if I could buy an acreage and plant it the way I wanted it planted, I could open it up as a demonstration site. Then I could have families come out and learn. I think the best thing is to actually educate the kids. You can teach them to eat right and to grown some of their food and to source out good food and to understand the importance.

She aimed to expand her current activities, which included teaching workshops about cooking and gardening. Nicole too saw her ideal food system as one with more opportunities for people to connect with where their food comes from:

> I think that when you walk into a grocery store, our vision is that there is that rich diversity of locally produced goods in every section. I mean every city should be designed around food and we should have more community gardens and we should be designing our buildings to have rooftop gardens and balconies with enough space for food. We're just creating space and creating opportunity for people to grow food and also creating opportunity for people to connect with food. I think that's where most people are actually engaged on food and it's about community. We just need something to rally around and food is a great place to rally.

In summary, the current activities of these actors and their visions for how the future should look both focused on creating opportunities to reconnect with food, through education and awareness campaigns.

Local Food Initiatives: Social Movement or Community of Practice?

At the outset of this paper, I questioned whether an empirical example of a potential food movement fit established definitions of social movements and used the concepts of frames, strategies, and activities to situate a case study of a local food initiative in Edmonton, on a theoretical continuum between community of practice and social movement. In this section I compare the frames, strategies, and activities I observed in the empirical case study with those in an example of a global food movement, La Vía Campesina. Contrasting these two case studies allows us to further explore the meanings and implications of local food initiatives. Drawing on the literature review, I discuss where local food initiatives fall on the continuum between communities of practice and social movements, using a case study to illustrate how one example of a local food movement may be classified theoretically.

As discussed previously, there are some key distinctions between communities of practice and social movements. Communities of practice frame issues as local problems and local responsibilities (Wenger and Snyder 2000). They strategically create communities of interest to establish these best practices, forging a group with shared interests in order to address a problem or the symptoms of a problem (ibid). Their activities focus primarily on promoting best practices and building relationships (ibid). In contrast, social movements frame the issues they tackle as global problems that are rights-based (Gamson 1992; Oliver and Johnston 2000). Strategically, they focus on encouraging

collective identity among members, creating global solidarity, and identifying the root sources of a problem (Cohen 1985). Social movements focus their activities on cultural and political protest, engaging with state, policy, and institutions to meet their strategic goals (Rucht and Neidhardt 2002). While communities of practice and social movements frame issues differently and employ different strategies, there are a few similarities in their activities. Both focus on education and relationships, albeit in different ways. Communities of practice use education to share and promote best practices among group members (Wenger and Snyder 2000), while social movements use education and knowledge-sharing to increase knowledge about the root sources of social-environmental problems and share tactics for resistance (Casas-Cortés et al., 2008; Cohen, 1985; Oliver & Johnston, 2000). Both build networks and relationships, but use them as a means to different ends. I use these conceptual frameworks to situate an empirical case study, facilitating a discussion about the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities that local food initiatives have to incite transformative social and environmental change in the food system.

As demonstrated in the review of the literature on La Vía Campesina, the frames, strategies, and activities the group employed fit very closely with the way social movements are described in the literature. La Vía Campesina frames their struggle as rights-based, focusing on global issues such as neoliberalism and globalization, and articulating them in a manner that a diverse membership from around the world can relate to and support (Borras 2008). They strategically use solidarity and collective identity to strengthen and spread their message. To express this strategy, they engage in colourful cultural and political protests, simultaneously holding demonstrations across the world calling for changes to policy and practice (Desmarais 2008). Directly challenging the dominant paradigm, they offer suggestions for land reform and create critical dialogue about neoliberal globalization. The networks, relationships, and educational activities within La Vía Campesina are an important catalyst for this kind of political work. It was not until a broader membership had been established and knowledge about politics had spread throughout the network that they were able to launch their Global Campaign for Agrarian Reform (Borras 2008). This is a key lesson from this example, as it demonstrates how weaver and builder work can provide the foundations for successful warrior work. Further,

this example demonstrates how warriors, builders, and weavers work together in social movements to create transformative change.

While the local food initiatives I studied had some similarities to La Vía Campesina, there were a number of key differences. Both case studies demonstrated the importance of education and relationships to defining and achieving objectives. The type of educational activities discussed and observed during data collection in Edmonton were distinct, in that they focused on encouraging food-related skills, such as cooking, canning, gardening, and butchery, instead of on building political skills such as protesting, policy work, or fostering critical discussion of the dominant paradigm. As illustrated earlier, these initiatives focused on the positive aspects of local food instead of the challenges. These findings reflect similar studies of local food initiatives in Canada, whose narratives "celebrate local food, rather that criticizing food injustice" (Desmarais and Wittman 2014). Participants identified personal and community health and happiness issues as associated with the disconnection between people and food. Solutions were positioned as local responsibilities, with little discussion of the role of government, the possibility to critique and challenge policy barriers to facilitate change, or the structural or institutional hurdles facing sustainable food. Instead, these initiatives focused on the role of the citizen-consumer to reconnect with their food through shopping, cooking, and growing local. Strategically, this was expressed as the need to create more networks of people interested in local food, foster awareness among consumers about local food, and demonstrate alternative ways of growing, cooking, shopping, and eating. The activities that were observed and discussed during interviews reflected these strategies. Further, a number of the activities that participants focused on took place in the market sphere, with a strong emphasis on entrepreneurial activities, which often fell into the weaver and builder roles which Stevenson et al. (2007) describe. Actors I spoke with explicitly rejected the third component of a social movement described Stevenson et al. (2007), the warrior, strategically positioning themselves as advocates instead of activists. Table 3 provides an overview of the frames, strategies, and activities used by actors in an empirical case study and compares them with those in La Vía Campesina.

Table 3 Frames, strategies, and activities of local food initiatives in Edmonton, compared with a global food sovereignty movement

	Local Food: Edmonton	Food Sovereignty: La Vía Campesina
Frames	• Food as choice • Consumers are disconnected from food	• Food as a right • Producers are marginalized by neoliberal globalization
Strategies	• Educate the consumer about importance of local food • Reconnecting producers and consumers at the local level	• Create a collective identity • Global solidarity amongst peasants • Identify the root cause of injustice
Activities	• Expand opportunities for local food production and consumption • Farm visits, workshops, networking events, etc…	• Engage with state and institutional actors • Protests occurring simultaneously across the globe

While there are a few similarities between the local food initiatives in Edmonton and La Vía Campesina, based on the frames, strategies, and activities I observed, the Edmonton-based initiatives are theoretically closer to a community of practice than a social movement. The framing used by these initiatives is one of the key findings that supports this conclusion. Local food initiatives frame the problem as one of disconnection; that consumers do not know where their food comes from, which creates human and community health issues. The problem of disconnection is addressed through promoting the responsibility of consumers to participate in the local food system. This framing is distinct when compared with the frames used by many successful social movements, who tend to frame their struggle as global, structural, and collective. In the case of La Vía Campesina, the problem is framed as one of neoliberal globalization, which can be addressed through a focus on human rights and global justice. Contrastingly, in Edmonton's local food initiatives, actors placed a strategic emphasis on educating the consumer, promoting awareness, and creating closer links between producers and consumers. When compared with the strategies of social movements, alternative food initiatives in Edmonton placed much less of an emphasis on collective identity, solidarity, and justice. While a few

people I interviewed brought up social justice, the topic was not discussed in great detail and was not a key focus during the events or meetings I observed. Finally, the activities and practices observed and discussed during this research centered on providing education about local food and creating networks of people interested in it. While these educational, demonstrative, and relational civic practices are similar to Stevenson et al.'s (2007) builder and weaver, there was one key activity missing in these local food initiatives, that of the warrior. Overall, social movements tend to place much more emphasis on warrior activities such as cultural and political protest, resistance to the dominant paradigm, and engagement with state and institutional actors. These civic practices were not observed extensively in Edmonton, in fact, participants vocally opposed warrior-type activities.

Civic practices aim to create public spaces to critique social problems, question their root causes, and debate solutions (Eliasoph 1996, 2011, 2013). However, the civic practices of the actors I observed indicated that actors largely focused on the positive aspects of local food instead of fostering critical public debate. Instead, these initiatives focused on creating new spaces to produce and consume. While alternative production and consumption methods are an important part of food system change, they are just one component of the bigger picture. Focusing heavily on consumption in particular, provides limited opportunities to question the dominant paradigm, imagine truly revolutionary alternatives, or resist the current system of social and political organization (Szasz 2009). Further, there is the potential for public spirited actions to evaporate if there is no context for them (Eliasoph 2011). In the absence of public acceptability of warrior or activist type behaviours (eg., protesting, engaging with institutional actors, encouraging critical public debate), this type of civic practice may further evaporate. As demonstrated in my discussions with Grant, a farmer, while many may be aware of the global issues associated with food and agriculture, if there is no where to express these concerns and activist activities are publicly discouraged, these concerns may lose out to more popular issues. While a focus on local food itself is not inherently problematic, the danger is that by discouraging warrior activities, the potential for local food politics to cultivate civic skills is limited.

While this chapter found the local food initiatives in Edmonton to be closer to a community of practice than a social movement, this is not in itself a negative verdict for AFNs. Being closer to a community of practice creates some unique opportunities for local food. A community of practice is optimal for transferring knowledge and best practices among members (Wenger et al. 2002). In the case of local food, this means improved production, processing, packaging, distribution, consumption, and recycling practices can be transmitted quickly among members. Further, the relationships and networks the community has developed can act as a strong basis for future activities, including recruitment of new members or collaboration among groups. In the event of a strategic shift towards social or environmental justice frameworks, local food initiatives could draw on the relationships that have been established to address these new issues.

However, the frames, strategies, and activities chosen by AFNs also come with potential challenges. As currently organized, the local food initiatives in the Edmonton region may not be poised to address structural barriers to food system transformation such as corporate control, hegemony, or neoliberalism. As there is a strong emphasis on the responsibility of the consumer, there is the potential for some citizens to be excluded, as they may not have the same purchasing power as others and thus existing power relations may be reproduced (Rosset 2013). Further, some suggest that the danger of market-focused change activities is that they can potentially limit citizen engagement in politics, because people feel as though they have adequately participated simply through their consumption (Szasz 2009). This potentially limits future mobilization, one of the key goals of social movements (Passy and Monsch 2014). Given that local food initiatives currently possess limited skills and willingness to engage with state and institutional actors and activism is not a common practice, these initiatives possess limited capability to challenge the dominant paradigm or ultimately, to transform the food system.

Some of the findings I have touched on here demonstrate the similarities that local food initiatives have with other social movements. Similar to national food movements which are made up from diverse actors from across the nation, actors in alternative food networks can have strong ideological differences that make it challenging to create a cohesive movement (Desmarais and Wittman 2014). However, there is opportunity to find

common ground and develop collective action frames that encourage solidarity among a heterogeneous group. As demonstrated by the literature on La Vía Campesina, strong weaver and builder activities are key to the success of a burgeoning movement. New practices, including cultural and political protest, activism, and engagement with state and institutional actors could also be implemented within and beyond the community, using the strong educational focus the network already has. If local food initiatives were to bring in a rights-based framing and question the etiquette that currently distrusts political protest, the already fertile foundation of communication and interest could be applied to developing tactics to address power relations and resist the dominant paradigm. Such a shift would move local food initiatives along the spectrum, towards social movements.

Conclusion

This paper used the literature on social movements and communities of practice to develop a framework to analyse a case study of a local food initiative from Edmonton, Alberta. Drawing from the literature, I constructed a theoretical continuum, using communities of practice and social movements as the endpoints. Three key concepts were used to illustrate the similarities and differences between these two endpoints: frames, strategies, and activities. Ultimately, this chapter demonstrated that the frames, strategies, and activities of local food initiatives in Edmonton shared some key similarities with national food movements, but were missing one key component, activists who engage in political and cultural protest. The local food initiatives in this study strived to reconnect people with their food by create alternatives to the current system, build networks of producers and consumers, and promote awareness about local food. Yet they largely avoided challenging the dominant paradigm, instead maintaining a positive attitude and participating in market-based activities to promote local food. Based on these findings, I concluded that the local food initiatives in Edmonton are situated closer to a community of practice on the continuum.

This finding has important implications for both theory and practice. Theoretically, this paper provides an empirical basis for interpreting other potential social movements. In particular, some have called into question the ability of market-based initiatives that rely

on consumer-driven change to transform social and political systems (Richards 2012). The criteria I use could be applied to other market-based initiatives, such as climate change campaigns that promote green consumption as a means of reducing carbon emissions. For example, the Forest Stewardship Council provides certification of wood and pulp products, encouraging consumers to purchase certified wood products to reduce the environmental footprint of forestry (Taylor 2005). Like local food initiatives, many question whether these activities, which are rooted in the market but not completely embedded in it, can provide transformative change, or if their ties to the marketplace undermine their social or environmental objectives (ibid). These initiatives could be analyzed using the criteria presented in this chapter to question whether this approach constitutes a movement and ultimately, to explore what the implications of this finding is for the potential of these initiatives to create transformative social change.

While the case study I have examined here is not representative of all local food initiatives, the findings shared here are similar those of many others who have explored the goals and meanings of alternative food networks that emphasize local food (eg., Allen et al. 2003; Goodman et al. 2011). Certainly the possibility exists that there are other local food initiatives that have successfully integrated justice frameworks into their work or linked up with other networks to create a social movement with broader framing and collective goals. Although the eat local initiatives in Edmonton fall closer to a community of practice on the continuum, these findings do not preclude the possibility that these initiatives may one day be closer to a social movement. While the goals of local food may be less focused on large scale transformative change, instead placing their emphasis on making local food more accessible to improve health, happiness, and the local economy, there is the potential for these initiatives to reimagine their goals and transform into something more akin to a social movement, perhaps becoming part of a larger global food and agricultural movement that focuses on creating substantive changes to the food system.

Chapter Four
Conclusion

This research was designed to contribute to theoretical and practical understandings of how and why civic practices are used to promote change to the food system and to characterize the type of change that is likely to result from these activities. Drawing on a case study of a local food initiative in the Edmonton region, I used qualitative methods, including data collected from in-depth individual interviews and participant observation to address two key objectives:

1. How, and to what extent, do the cultural politics of alternative food networks create opportunities to foster a more just and sustainable food system?

2. How, and to what extent, do the discourses, strategies, and activities of alternative food networks fit with scholarly definitions of social movements?

To answer these questions, this study draws on literature on civic practices, social movements, and citizenship. The findings of this study are interpreted against work from other scholars who have explored the cultural politics, civic practices, and the frames, strategies, and activities of those working to change the food system.

Key Findings

> Examinations of beliefs focus on the seemingly "inner," subjective world of feelings and meanings; examinations of structural forces typically focus on the seemingly "outer," objective, automatic systems of money and power. What is missing in this dichotomy between "ideology" and "structures," "micro" and "macro," "subjective" and "objective," is interaction, intersubjectivity, patterns of civility in everyday life (Eliasoph 1996:264).

Throughout these chapters, I have provided a rich description of the civic practices of alternative food networks and context that gives rise to those practices, situating an empirical case study among others to determine the potential these local food initiatives have to encourage transformative social change. In Chapter Two, I used contrasting accounts of alternative food networks to situate this empirical case study within the food

studies literature that debates the transformative potential of alternative food. I discussed the relative importance of various ideologies, from the macro-level consideration of neoliberalism, to a micro-level assessment of the discourses of reconnection, pleasure and awareness. Further deepening the characterization of food politics in Edmonton, I also described the, educational and relational civic practices that comprise the cultural politics of local food initiatives. I showed how these ideologies, discourses, and civic practices comprise a cultural politics that places the onus for food system change on the individual consumer and emphasizes market-based approaches. By illustrating how the etiquette of these networks discourages critical examination of power relations, I challenged the idea that local food initiatives in Edmonton provide an adequate basis for transformative social change.

Building upon these findings, Chapter Three used an example of a social movement, La Vía Campesina to situate an empirical case study of local food initiatives along a continuum from community of practice to social movement. I analyzed the frames, strategies, and activities in each case study to illustrate the theoretical and practical distinctions between communities of practice and social movements. While I found a number of similarities between the case studies, for instance, both focused on social learning and creating and widening networks of support, these activities took on a unique flavour in Edmonton, compared with the global food sovereignty case study. The local food initiatives in Edmonton emphasized deliberately eschewed advocacy over activism, taking a pejorative view of political protest, and consciously avoiding critique of institutional actors. That is, the absence of seeking to redress inequitable power relations sets local food initiatives on a very different trajectory in the public sphere, compared with more traditional social movements. Accordingly, I situated the local food initiatives in Edmonton closer to a community of practice on the continuum that spanned communities of practice to social movement, and questioned whether such initiatives were able to adequate address social justice issues or structural barriers to food system change.

Limitations and Areas for Future Research

The findings of this research indicate several avenues for future exploration in food studies and political and environmental sociology. While I offered a broader sample then most in food studies, there is still a growing need to examine the roles that people who do not strictly fit consumer/producer classifications play in food system change. Some of the key actors who participate in the food system were not a part of this study, including farm labourers, grocery store owners/managers, packaging manufacturers, waste managers, and those who transport and distribute food. Further research should examine how actors working in all parts of the food system envision and contribute to food system change.

Additionally, this study did not have a diverse socio-demographic sample, thus further work in this area could be done. One key area that this study did not touch on is gender. Although some of the observations made during this study hinted at the role gender plays in civic engagement and in food work in particular, given the limitations of a Masters thesis, this concept was not explored in detail. Data from this study could be used for a gendered analysis, using cultural politics to explore the contested meanings and practices that comprise local food initiatives. Future work could also build upon the critical analysis this study has contributed regarding diversity in local food initiatives.

As suggested earlier, the possibility that parallel alternative food networks exist remains (Gibb and Wittman 2013). While the overwhelming majority of people I spoke with focused on connection and education, there was one notable exception. Ernesto, a member of a cooperative community garden whose members are largely immigrants had a completely different approach than the others I spoke with. Instead of focusing on educating the consumer, he helped to organize an unprecedented protest again the developers who had planned to tear down the community garden. More than any of the other participants, he discussed food in terms of rights instead of responsibilities. Although I did not have time to explore the potential for parallel networks, this finding indicates one avenue for future research. While this thesis explored mainstream understandings of local food, further insight into whether or not there is evidence of other parallel networks, how these networks interact, what issues they focus on, and why they are separate from mainstream local food initiatives is important. This work needs to extend beyond white,

middleclass actors and include participants from regions across Canada, in both urban and rural settings.

Finally, Chapter Two described the similarities and differences between the ideologies, discourses, and civic practices of farmers and others working to change the food system. These findings indicated one key difference: the depth and emphasis that farmers placed on environmental issues was significantly stronger than I observed in other groups. Building upon this, further explorations of the ways that context influences discourses and civic practices could be conducted. The data from this study could also be used to further explore this topic with a critical eye to the different experiences urban and rural residents have with regards to how and why they participate in food politics. Critical examination of the contextual factors that influence civic engagement could also potentially contribute to practical and theoretical understandings of how to encourage socially and environmentally positive practices.

Conclusions

> It is time to step back, think and *say* the right thing. True, we often talk about something instead of doing it; but sometimes we also do things in order to avoid talking and thinking about them (Žižek 2009:11).

In these chapters, I suggest that civic practices, in their ideal form, aim to create public spaces to critique and discuss social issues, debate the root causes of social and environmental problems, and explore solutions. The civic practices that were observed in this case study tended to focus on creating more spaces to produce and consume. While awareness about growing and eating local food can play a role in food system change, this is just one piece of a bigger picture. Žižek (2009) suggests that we need to stop and think about the root causes of social problems, and that obsessing over solving problems precludes such a systematic analysis of power and privilege. While it feels good to return with a full hamper from a shopping trip at the farmers market or a community supported agriculture pick up, these actions do not inherently encourage us to reevaluate the historical and contextual factors that may limit others from doing the same or make the

conceptual leap to the environmental destruction that could be associated with the food we eat.

This case study demonstrated how actors in local food initiatives emphasize weaver and builder work, focusing their attention to creating relationships between producers and consumers and implementing alternative ways of shopping, cooking, and growing food. I demonstrated the strengths of this work, in that it is hopeful and creates positive ways for people to engage civically. Yet this study also demonstrated how these local food initiatives are different than social movements, in that they do not focus on collective action or critically evaluate the root causes of the negative environmental or social impacts of food and agriculture. Although the literature review of La Vía Campesina demonstrated how weaver and builder work can provide support for warrior work, the local food initiatives in this study explicitly discouraged critical debate and positioned their work as advocacy instead of activism.

In Chapter Three, I questioned the contextual and personal factors that discouraged warrior activity, exploring the discourses and civic practices that shape the cultural politics of local food. This study indicated that the etiquette of the public spaces where food was discussed silenced critical debate by explicitly encouraging members to focus on the positive aspects of alternative food and agriculture. Further, I have detailed the individual perceptions of actors working to change the food system, providing rich descriptions of the dualism that many have constructed between advocacy and activism and detailing the reluctance many have to call their food work political. These findings indicate that food system problems and solutions are often framed as individual, in that they can be solved through shopping, cooking, and growing more food locally. This framework tends to exclude structural and global issues, such as the environment, food security, and food sovereignty.

While this critique highlighted some of the potential limitations of local food initiatives, this study also indicated some strengths, which can provide the basis for creating a movement that integrates power and justice into its framing and aim to create transformative social change. In Chapter Two, I discussed how the relational and educational civic practices that dominate local food could be harnessed to encourage a

diverse membership, build models of collective action, facilitate critical public dialogue, recruit new practitioners, and explore new ways to encourage environmentally and socially positive practices. In Chapter Three, I offered examples of how the strengths of communities of practice, such as sharing best practices and developing networks, could potentially contribute to the development of a food movement which integrates social justice and environmental concerns and focuses on the root causes of current food system challenges.

This study used food as a means to study civic engagement and cultural politics, developing an understanding of how and why people engage in their communities to promote food systems that are healthy for people and the planet. I aimed to go beyond consumption, integrating rich and detailed descriptions of actors working in civil, state, and market based aspects of the food system who are working for change. Drawing on interviews with farmers, community organizers, volunteers, educators, government employees, and entrepreneurs, I explored the political consciousness of range of actors and illustrated how food politics is enacted in speech and action. This study demonstrated how consumption is a key focus for many working on food system change. Indeed, consumption is an important part of daily life, as (2006) reiterates, "you can vote with your fork and you can do it three times a day." Yet this study also emphasizes the importance of speaking publicly about the limitations, barriers, and conflicts of local food and engaging in a food politics which critically examines the root structural, political, and contextual factors that underpin the negative consequences of food and agriculture.

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Appendix A

Recruitment Flyer

Are you involved in cultivating food systems that are healthy for people and the planet?

Whether you eat food or grow food, are paid or unpaid, researchers at the University of Alberta would like to hear about how you are promoting sustainable food systems. If you live or work within the greater Edmonton area, we would like to hear from you.

We are looking for research participants willing to provide their story. Interviews will take about 1-1.5 hours, scheduled at your convenience.

This research will be presented to community members and will benefit the public by providing insight into the ways citizens are working to create sustainable food systems, the challenges they experience, and the opportunities they envision.

For more information, or to indicate interest, please contact:

Researcher: Cathryn Sprague csprague@ualberta.ca or (780) 239-0398

Supervisor: Dr. Emily Huddart Kennedy huddartk@ualberta.ca or (780) 492-7900

Are you involved in promoting food systems that are healthy for people and the planet?

Whether you eat food or grow food, are paid or unpaid, researchers at the University of Alberta would like to hear about how you are promoting sustainable food systems. If you live or work within the greater Edmonton area, we would like to hear from you.

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Researcher: Cathryn Sprague csprague@ualberta.ca or (780) 239-0398

Supervisor: Dr. Emily Huddart Kennedy huddartk@ualberta.ca or (780) 492-7900

Appendix B

Recruitment Questions

1. What are some food projects you have worked on or food focused organizations you have worked with?

2. What role(s) did you play?

3. Do you grow food? If so, do you eat most of it, give some away, or sell most of it?

4. Have you worked on promoting sustainable food systems at your workplace? If so, how?

Appendix C

Project Information and Consent Form

INFORMATION LETTER and CONSENT FORM

Study Title: Beyond Production and Consumption: Mapping Citizen Engagement in Sustainable Food in the Public Sphere

Master's Student
Cathryn Sprague
515 General Services Building
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB, T6G 2H1
csprague@ualberta.ca
(780) 239-0398

Principal Investigator
Emily Huddart Kennedy
515 General Services Building
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB, T6G 2H1
huddartk@ualberta.ca
(780) 492-7900

Background

You have been asked to participate in this study because you promote sustainable food systems in the greater Edmonton area. This project will look at the many ways that people in and around Edmonton are creating food systems that are healthy for both people and the planet. Whether you are paid or unpaid, eat food or grow food, we are interested in talking to you. Through interviews, a greater understanding of the motivations and experiences of individuals will be gained.

This is an academic research project examining civic engagement the sustainable food movement as a case study. The data collected will be used to write peer-reviewed and non-peer reviewed articles, as well as a masters thesis. This study will also advance research on sustainable food systems in academic publications. The results may also be shared with community groups and policy makers.

Purpose

This research project will explore how people in and around Edmonton are creating food systems that are healthy for both people and the planet. To do so, we will interview citizens who are promoting sustainable food systems in their workplace or in their community. We will talk to those who grow food for sale, as well as those who purchase most of their food, to explore their unique views and experiences. Through these interviews we hope to develop a deeper understanding of the motivations and experiences of these individuals.

Study Procedures

If you decide to participate, we will schedule an interview at a time and location that is convenient for you. Interviews will occur between June and September 2013. They will take about 1 to 1.5 hours. We will discuss how you promote sustainable food systems, why you do so, and what challenges you have faced.

The interview will be recorded with your permission. I will personally transcribe what was said. I will encrypt the recording and my notes and keep them in a locked room on a password-protected computer. Your name and any identifying features will not be noted on these documents. Only the Emily and Cathryn will have access to the notes and transcript. If you would like to look over the transcript, please notify Emily or Cathryn by **December 15, 2013**.

Risks and Benefits

By discussing your involvement in promoting sustainable food, this research may broaden your self-understanding. It may also benefit the community groups you are involved in. This research is of minimal risk to you. It is not expected that the risks of participating are above what you would encounter in your daily life.

This research will broaden understanding of citizenship, community involvement, and

sustainable food systems. It may provide the basis for future research into food system sustainability. This study will benefit the public by providing more information about the role of community members in sustainable food systems. This research may also help community groups address opportunities and challenges in promoting sustainable food systems.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to answer certain questions during the interview. You may also ask that some or all of your answers be removed from the transcript after the interview. You may withdraw any portion of the interview or fully withdraw from this study any time before **September 30, 2013**. If you choose to withdraw all or part of your data, the data will be destroyed immediately. Feel free to discuss this with any member of the research team before that time.

Confidentiality & Anonymity

With your permission, the findings will be used in my thesis project and to write papers for journals, magazines, and community groups. Presentations based on this research may also be prepared for academic and public audiences. Only the study team will have access to the transcripts and notes. Your answers will be kept confidential. The results may be shared with some of the groups you are a part of. Therefore, we cannot guarantee that others in the group will not recognize some of your answers to interview questions. However, your name and identifying features will be removed from the transcripts. Your answers will not be directly traceable back to you. The interview transcripts and our notes will be kept encrypted and kept on a password protected computer. We will keep your name and contact information on a separate list, which will also be encrypted and kept on a password protected computer. This list is so that we may contact you with the study results. We may use the data from this study in future research, but if we do this it will have to be approved by a Research Ethics Board.

If you would like a copy of the final research report, you may request one from Cathryn or Emily.

Further Information

If you have any questions about this research, now or in the future, please contact Cathryn or Emily. The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

Consent Statement

I have read this form and the research study has been explained to me. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. If I have additional questions, I have been told whom to contact. I agree to participate in the research study described above and will receive a copy of this consent form. I will receive a copy of this consent form after I sign it.

_____ _____

Participant's Name (printed) and Signature Date

I agree as the researcher, to follow the terms outlined in this document.

_____ _____

Researcher Name (printed) and Signature Date

Appendix D

Interview Guide

Interview Date:	Time Start:	Time End:
Participant Name:	Interview location:	

Explanation of Research: This interview is part of research I am conducting for my Masters thesis at the University of Alberta. I would like to learn more about the experiences of Edmontonians who are working to create sustainable food systems. The focus of this interview is to learn about how you participate in activities that promote sustainable food, why you do so, and if you have experienced any challenges along the way. As discussed previously, I will record this interview. As you have read and signed the consent form, I assume you understand your role in this research. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin? Feel free to ask questions at any time, or contact me, or my supervisor after the interview is complete.

Questions

1. Tell me the story of how you first became involved with [food/ag related project]

2. What inspired you to go beyond just buying/growing sustainable food on your own to start getting involved in the community? Why do you think it's important to become involved at a community level, beyond just acting on an individual level by changing what you buy or how you grow food?

3. What are things you do every day that you think inspire change in the food system? Is there anything you do that others might consider unusual/extraordinary?

4. Author Paul Hawken has a line that living sustainably should be "like falling off a log." What changes do you think we need in the Edmonton region to make sustainable food like falling off a log?

5. Recently I spoke with someone who is working on a large project that requires volunteers. She talked about how difficult it can be to find volunteers and get them on board. Is it easy to find volunteers?

7. When I talk to some of my family members who are farmers, they just don't have the time or energy left after planting crops, caring for animals, etc. to devote to food politics or policy or community projects. How do you fit this into your busy life?

8. How has your life changed to accommodate your involvement in the community?

9. Do you consider your involvement in food/ag to be political? Why or why not? How do you define food politics?

10. What is your vision of an ideal food system? What do we need to make this come about?

11. If you won the lottery and/or had unlimited resources would you continue to work on the project? How might it change or what else might you work on?

Wrap Up:

- Is there anything else you would like to tell us?
- Is there anything that you would like to see come out of this research project?
- Do you have any upcoming food related events, meetings, or activities that we could attend with you to see first hand some of the things you do?
- Is it okay if we contact you if we have any further questions?

Appendix E

Participant Observation Template

Record at beginning of event:

Date of observation	
Time of observation	
Location of observation	
Details about setting/context	
Event name	
Organized by	
Purpose of the event	
How did we hear about the event	
Membership/attendance (#s)	

Take notes during the event on:

Setting (describe with sensory details)	
Conflicts	
Power struggles	
What decisions were easy?	
Which decisions were not easy?	
Key events or incidents (include sensory detail, key words & quotes)	
Reactions; emotions evoked or displayed	
Identifiers, qualifiers	
"Us"/"them"; "enemy" talk	
Discussion of problems	
"Rules"	
Interactions	
Process of decision making	
Motivations of members	
Civic practices	
Food politics	

Write about later:

General impressions of group	
Talk about other groups	
Alliances, frictions, in/out group	
Dynamics within meetings	
What is "accomplished" and how	
Leadership – Who? Why?	
Spoken & unspoken norms	
Friction – what happens?	
Who sets the agenda? Monitors it? When does it shift?	
Anything expected that did not happen? (What didn't happen?)	
What wasn't said?	
What didn't you (or someone present) understand?	
How are people authorized to speak/act?	
What is assumed?	
Did they discuss food politics? How? Why?	
Did they discuss civic practices? Which ones? Why?	
Why were the members present?	