NIAGARA ALTERNATIVE FOOD PROJECTS: NETWORKS, DISCOURSES
AND NATURE

by

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Abstract

This thesis undertakes an exploration of the nature of alternative food projects in Niagara. A review of various theoretical approaches to the study of food and agriculture, suggests that actor-network theory offers the most useful lens through which to understand these projects. In particular, actor-network theory facilitates non-dualistic theorisations of power and scale and a commitment to the inclusion of non-humans in the 'social' sciences. The research is based on 19 in-depth interviews with actors involved in various urban and rural projects including community supported agriculture, community gardens, chefs using local seasonal food, a winery that grows organically, the good food box, a value-added small business, and organic producers.

The analysis consists of four themes. The first analytical section pays special attention to the prominence of agri-tourism in Niagara, and examines the ways in which the projects in the sample interact with agri-tourist networks. In the second section the discussion focuses on the discourses and practices of resistance among Niagara alternative food actors. The participants' interviews suggest there are more discourses of resistance toward agri-tourist than toward dominant food networks. The third section questions commodity chain theorisations of alternative food projects. In particular, this section shows how the inclusion of non-human actors in an analysis confounds conceptualisations of 'short' and 'local' chains. The final analytical section assesses relations of power in Niagara alternative food projects.

Three important conclusions arise from this research. First, Niagara alternative food projects cannot be conceptualised as operating at the 'local' scale. Broadening the

scope of analysis to include non-human actors, it becomes apparent that these projects actually draw on a variety of extra-local actors. They are at once local and global. Second, the projects in this sample are simultaneously part of alternative, dominant and agri-tourist networks. While Niagara alternative food projects do perform many of the roles characteristic of alternative food systems, they are also involved in practices of development, business, and class distinction. Thus, alternative food networks should not be understood as separate from and in direct opposition to dominant food networks. Despite the second conclusion, this research determines that Niagara alternative food projects have made significant strides in the reworking of power. The projects represented in this thesis do engage in resistant practices and are associated with increased levels of justice.

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Chapter One: Introduction and Methodology

I come from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, and became interested in food and agriculture when I took a third-year sociology course (at the University of Saskatchewan) on the topic. I should admit from the outset that I have never lived, or indeed spent more than a couple days, on a farm, and I have never participated in farm work. I mention this because many people in Ontario, including the participants in my study, assumed that since I was from Saskatchewan and am interested in food and agriculture I must have grown up on a farm, or in a small town. Nevertheless, it was the topic of food (including its production, consumption and other aspects) that inspired me to pursue graduate work, and the topic quickly came to occupy the 'top spot' in my hierarchy of interests. I felt it was a topic that brought together everything important I had learned during my interdisciplinary Bachelor degree in International Studies, including my interest in environmental studies. In many ways it was a universal topic. At the same time, food was a very personal topic for me. My parents were co-founders of a health food cooperative, I was (and continue to be) a vegetarian, and our family has always valued 'good' food. Moreover, food was a topic of justice, where the consumption of it and the profiting off of it were laden with extreme inequalities.

Food has been continually recognised as a substance that bridges the 'social' and the 'natural' and therefore, as a topic that has the potential to challenge disciplinarity and the nature/culture binary. Academics studying food have frequently referred to Paul Atkinson's (1983) quote that suggests that "food is a liminal substance; it stands as a bridging substance between nature and culture, the human and the natural, the outside

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and the inside". Along the same lines, Pierre Stassart and Sarah Whatmore (2003) argue that "[t]he metabolic impressions that the flesh of others imparts to our own are an enduring axiom of social relations with the nonhuman world and the porosity of the imagined borders which mark 'us' off from 'it'". I am drawn to the topic of food for many of these same reasons. Food is quite literally a substance that defies the nature/society dichotomy, as it travels from field (nature) to inside the body (society). Since I am in a programme titled Social Justice and Equity Studies, I am most interested in exploring food as a topic of justice. Here I use the term justice rather than social justice, since I am interested in the dismantling of the nature/society binary. In a programme titled Social Justice and Equity Studies, what place do non-humans occupy? Is this separation of the 'social' from the 'natural' (or environmental) not indeed unjust?

It is from these broad positions and questions that I began my M.A. research. To emphasise once more, I had two main objectives. First, I was interested in expanding, in my thesis, the analytical focus of 'social' justice to include relations with and between non-humans. Second, I was concerned with establishing food as a topic of justice. In accomplishing this latter task I chose to examine food projects in Niagara that offered *alternatives* to dominant (industrialised and capitalised) food systems. These alternatives included projects that claimed to foster more healthy relationships with the 'natural' environment, more direct links with consumers, and the use of 'local' resources. Such projects highlight that dominant food systems are indeed unjust; so much so that these actors have put considerable time, energy and thought into establishing alternatives (although this is not to say that alternative food projects are without unequal relations of power). From the insights of a long tradition in the political economy of food and

agriculture it is clear that food systems comprise sites of extremely unequal relations where corporate agri-business has been able to secure a strong hold on many of the processes through which food passes.

Within these broader goals, this study began as an *exploration* of the nature of alterative food projects in Niagara. The intention was to start with the experiences of the participants and to employ a very open-ended interview method in order to allow all sorts of issues and themes to emerge. For these reasons, I have found some of the insights of grounded theory useful in developing the research design for this thesis (see appendix A for a discussion of the methodological underpinnings of grounded theory). For example, rather than having a particular and pointed research question, I chose to formulate my research interests to correspond with what Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin (1990: 72-173) consider the most useful topics of analysis for developing grounded theory: action, process, and interaction. According to grounded theory procedures, the initial research question should be extremely broad so that it may evolve during the interview process in accordance with the themes and concerns that are raised by the participants. With regard to action, I was interested in the *practices* of people involved in alternative food projects. I was further intrigued by the *process* through which these food actors had arrived at their particular practices. A third general question revolved around the *interaction* these food projects had with (a) other actors, (b) institutions, including relevant private, governmental and non-governmental organisations, (c) the economy and markets, and (d) the natural environment.

A core epistemological assertion that allows for the justification of the interview method in qualitative studies is that humans are competent reporters of both their past and

present attitudes, beliefs, behaviours, relationships and interactions (Ackroyd and Hughes, 1992: 103). However, this is far from an uncontested premise. A common caution given by introductory research methods texts is that respondents cannot always be trusted to tell the "truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth" (Weiss, 1994: 149) about their experiences. This type of concern reflects a positivist's understanding of reality where there are believed to be objective truths about, for example, what people think and do and how they interact. For positivists, the collection of data through interviews can be problematic, as it is difficult to know which statements made by an interviewee are true, and which are manipulations of reality. Respondents may have cultural or strategic reasons for presenting information about themselves and others in a particular light, and may leave out or distort some information.

A second epistemological critique of the interview as a method has been mounted by postmodernists, who have no faith that interviews reveal the 'truth' about the actions, transactions and beliefs of respondents (May, 1993: 108). While postmodernists have been successful at deconstructing the positivist and realist commitments to objectivity and 'truth', they contend that interviews tell the researcher nothing beyond the accounts that people give (May, 1993: 108). From this position, interviews are a topic *for* social research, rather than a method *of* conducting social research. A post-modernist may engage in an analysis of an interview as text or discourse, but would disagree that that discourse is representative of anything (idea, practice, or belief) beyond itself (Dant, 1991: 235). For a post-modernist the interview is not necessarily an effective means to gain insight into people's beliefs and motivations since it tells us little beyond that encounter (Dant, 1991: 209).

In light of these two critiques of the epistemology of the interview method, I wish to qualify how I have pursued my own research. I have treated the interview as both a text that can be read as a topic *of* research, and also as a vehicle for revealing and generating knowledge beyond the text. I think these two epistemological positions must not be mutually exclusive. Similar to the postmodernist, I am interested in the discourses of my participants and the ways in which they have accounted their experiences. Unlike the postmodernist, I am taking the position that a link can be made between what a participant says they do and think and what they do and think in practice (or in situations and spaces beyond our interaction). This link, rather than being an objective 'truth' is interpreted and presented through a subjectivity (the interviewee) and received and (re)interpreted through a second subjectivity (myself as researcher). Since I understand objectivity to be unattainable, I have strived to understand the subject positions of both myself and my research participants. This is not to be suspicious of my participants' motivations and accounts, but rather to pay special attention to how they may wish to present their opinions and practices to me as a subject that is situated differently than others with whom they may interact. Thus, I was not concerned that my respondents were leaving out or 'manipulating' aspects of their stories, but rather with why they told me their stories in certain ways, and how they represented their practice to me (who may have been seen to varying degrees as a friendly or unfriendly other).

Employing the interview method meant that I was not in the position to observe how my respondents had come to adopt their practice and discourse, or what their long-term experience had been. I was, thus, careful to acknowledge that knowledge about the past is always refracted through the lens of the present (Ackroyd and Hughes, 1992:

112). In many cases, for example, it was difficult to unravel whether certain ideological commitments or discourses served as the motivating factor for adopting a practice, or whether that discourse had come to explain a practice that was adopted for other reasons. Alternative food actors, if not driven to act out of ideological or political commitments, were likely to have adopted such stances along the way.

The conceptualisations and analyses presented in this thesis are thus neither objective nor representative of situations and spaces beyond the Niagara context and the lives of the participants. I do, however (unlike the post-modernist), take the position that the interview method has allowed me to gain some insight into the practices, beliefs, and interactions of my participants in the context of Niagara. Since I do not consider the possibility that knowledge is objective, I understand these insights as partial and contested rather than as objective reflections of independent realities. That this study cannot be generalised to people and places outside of its focus does not mean that it may not be useful in informing further research or understanding in any number of related areas. Indeed, a study that is rooted firmly in a particular time and place, and that follows the leads given by the respondents has the possibility to be of use to a variety of different groups and organisations in many communities. Such studies may provide a framework for action, and may be integrated with other theories/studies to obtain further abstraction about structural conditions (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 22).

The sample of Niagara alternative food projects in this study was not selected randomly, nor was I concerned about it being representative of the region at large. I did not consider the practice of, for example, one ecological farmer to be representative of other or all ecological farmers. Rather, I simply started (with the help of my supervisor

who had lived in Niagara much longer than I and who had studied various forms of Niagara food production) by including all those projects that I knew about and considered to be 'alternative' (for a discussion of my working definition of alternative see Chapter 2). The sample with which I began my first round of interviews included one community supported agriculture (CSA) farmer (although I had solicited the participation of three); a family of 'ecological' farmers, selling at a local farmers' market; a coordinator of a community gardening project and an agriculturalist who volunteers in these gardens; three chefs associated with the organisation Tastes of Niagara; and the director of an non-governmental organisation that initiated several food projects. After having interviewed these people once, I decided to add two more respondents to my sample. I added a pesticide-free farmer who sold directly to a few of the winery restaurants, and also a winemaker from a winery that grows organically. The farmer was added to gain insight into the relationship between chefs and their growers, and the winemaker was added when I discovered that this organic project existed. In total, ten participants were included in my study.

After having identified who my participants were and defining my research topic broadly in terms of action, process and interaction, it was time to conduct my first round of interviews. As mentioned above, I was particularly concerned with employing a very open-ended interview model so that my own conceptions of food systems and 'alternative' practices would not frame and constrain our interaction. I wanted the interview to be lead by the concerns and perspectives of my respondents. However, since I had never conducted an interview before I was not comfortable going in without any guide. I therefore crafted interview guides tailored specifically to each respondent in case

the conversation did not flow naturally. The questions I included in these guides were meant to probe at my three areas of interest: action, process and interaction. I rarely used these guides and opted to maintain eye contact with my respondents asking questions about the issues they raised. This, I feel, had the effect of keeping me engaged in the conversation, validating my respondents' experiences and opinions, and encouraging them to continue sharing. The process of crafting these guides did, however, prove to be useful as I always had a few key questions upon which to fall back if the flow of the conversation slowed. I usually began my interviews by asking the respondent to tell me a little bit about their project.

I spent much time and effort reading through the transcripts of my first interview set so as to identify a few key categories. It was especially important at this time to engage in microanalysis (detailed line-by-line analysis) so that initial categories could emerge. Once I had discovered a few early categories I was able to code transcripts using these categories and was not so concerned with detailed analysis of every line, although certain sentences or lines, which seemed pivotal, still required microanalytical treatment. As I re-read my coding I was concerned with generating questions for my next round of interviews in order to 'fill-out' my emerging categories.

I returned to my participants once more in order to add further detail to the categories I had already generated. While Strauss and Corbin recommend returning to participants enough times to completely saturate conceptual categories, two rounds of interviews provided me with so much data that I was struggling to organise it. I suspect that further rounds of interviews could have resulted in different core categories, and thus a much different analysis. With more time and depth I may have replaced some of my

initial categories with other categories, or I may have attached other significance to these initial core categories. This second round of interviews was less participant-led than the first; it was designed more to question and add depth to the concepts at the centre of my analyses. As I returned to each participant I presented them a copy of our first interview transcript and asked for clarification on points that were inaudible. At this time I wanted to let them know what my objectives were with my thesis. For participants who seemed eager to understand my project I explained my argument about not dichotomising the social and the natural as separate categories of justice. I also shared my specific interests in terms of understanding the power relations at play in alternative projects, and the ways in which the (support for the) agri-tourist industry may have affected such projects. I did notice that letting my participants know my own commitments and biases affected how they presented their practices and commitments. For the participants with whom I felt the most political and ethical solidarity, disclosing my own biases, I felt, had the effect of eliciting more confident discourses. Interestingly, of the participants with whom I felt the least political cohesion, few let me speak long enough to explain my own biases.

Many of the questions I asked during the second round of interviews referred back to what participants had said in the first round. I often paraphrased or read aloud a passage from the transcript and asked participants to elaborate on these statements, or tell me why they felt the way they did. I also asked each participant questions around a few standard topics (something I had not done in the first round). These questions were focused around my core categories. Interviews in this round were much shorter than those conducted in my first round[1]. After finishing my second round of interviews I

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[1] Typically a first round interview lasted one to one and a half hours, while a second round interview lasted twenty-five minutes to one hour.

returned once more to the data, adding to and readjusting my core concepts. A few of my core categories were fairly undeveloped after the first round since I had not recognised them as (core) concerns or categories from the outset.

While I have drawn on some of the insights and followed some of the procedures laid out by grounded theorists Strauss and Corbin, I do not claim to have developed a grounded theory. Rather, I have chosen a substantive theoretical framework for my research and have applied it fairly deductively. It was while I was conducting my second round of interviews that I decided to use Actor Network Theory (ANT) as a substantive theory to which I could relate my research. At that point, I felt that my data pointed to no single substantive theory as more applicable than all others. Rather, in the wide range of data I had collected, different concepts and pieces pointed to the relevance of different theories. I chose ANT more for its applicability to the concepts I wished to highlight than for it being of uncontested or natural relevance to the full range of my data. I was especially drawn to ANT's inclusion of non humans in 'social' theory, and I felt that Niagara alternative food projects could be accurately conceptualised as networks. The resulting analysis applies key concepts in actor-network theory to the realities of Niagara alternative food actors and their projects.

The next chapter outlines a number of theoretical perspectives employed by authors writing about food and agriculture, and provides an in-depth discussion of actor-network theory. The first two sections of the third chapter offer some details about the projects in my sample, and establish the economic context of Niagara. I have divided the analysis into four sections. Section 3.3 discusses agri-tourism as a network to which many of the projects in my sample belong. I also argue here that a driving force behind

the success of this network is the mutually reinforcing discourse of business-development-tourism. Section 3.4 brings to the fore discourses and practices of resistance among alternative food actors. Section 3.5 conceptualises alternative projects as (part of) networks, and shows that nature's participation in alternative food networks is active and crucial. In the final analytical section (3.6) I turn to questions of justice and give some insight into the power relations at play in alternative food projects/networks. The fourth and final chapter puts forth a number of theoretical and empirical conclusions that I have drawn from this research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Numerous theoretical frameworks and conceptual tools are employed by contemporary researchers in the study of agri-food systems. The purpose of this chapter is to briefly outline a few of these major frameworks and establish actor-network theory as a desirable and politically significant perspective through which to study alternative food projects. In so doing, I explain the importance of using a network rather than commodity chain analysis for understanding agency, nature and scale. Lastly, I consider how various authors have constructed meanings of *alternative* projects/networks and come to my own working definition of 'alternative food projects' for the purposes of this thesis.

The Political Economy of Food Systems

The political economy perspective, rooted in the traditions of Marxism and neo-Marxism, has a long and fruitful history in the study of food systems and remains a relevant framework today.[2] Those writing in this tradition have been concerned with macro-economic structures and the penetration of capitalism into rural and agricultural spheres. Such literature (eg. Bernstein et al., 1990; Winson, 1993; Magdoff, Foster, and Buttel, 2000) is focused primarily on the socially and environmentally destructive dominant food system which is characterised by increasing capitalisation and consolidation over time. Rather than a system designed to feed people, the dominant

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[1] A classical political economy perspective also exists and is rooted in the traditions of classical economics and the writings of economists such as Adam Smith. Classical political economy focuses more on the micro relations that produce the structure, than on the macro conditions that determine the particular. I use the term political economy to refer to the Marxist and critical traditions.

food system can be thought of as an industrial complex with the primary goal of generating surplus value. Profit is accumulated through the exploitation of workers, farmers and the environment (Goodman and Redclift, 1991, Barndt, 1999).

Literature that uses the perspective of political economy has been particularly effective in highlighting structural inequalities in the food system. Such literature (eg., Heffernan, 2000; McMichael, 2000) emphasises how capitalist firms gain increasing power over time through vertical and horizontal integration and through technological advancements that allow them to put new demands on growers. Growers (including peasants and farmers) are understood as having little bargaining power; they are often forced to take the prices offered by buyers and to adhere to the specifications dictated by the industry. This conceptualisation totalises the power of capital and downplays the agency of growers, and the ways in which they are sometimes able to obtain more favourable conditions or sell their produce outside of dominant agricultural systems. The structural inequalities which are the focus of political economists are thus rendered static and it becomes difficult to imagine their dismantling.

Like other sectors of the economy, the food system has become increasingly globalised over time. This process of globalisation is understood, in the political economy perspective, as the expansion of capital and its logic across national and regional boundaries (Busch and Juska, 1997: 689). It is seen as a political project with the purpose of opening up space for the domination of transnational corporate actors including agri-food corporations (McMichael, 1996: 27-28). The process of globalisation in the food system occurs through the extension of relations of exploitation across space. Through this process, firms are enabled to decrease their costs by capitalising on

expanding structures of inequality; in so doing they contribute to their further entrenchment. This conceptualisation of the process of globalisation, leaves little room for a theoretical understanding of resistance or for the diversity of the effects of globalisation in different places.[3]

Commodity Chain Analyses

Commodity chain analyses include a number of conceptual approaches such as global commodity chains, *filières*, systems of provision, and commodity circuits that belong to different theoretical traditions. Commodity chain analyses are important both methodologically and conceptually to the study of food systems. They are used to trace the stages, processes and agents through which a commodity passes (eg., input vendors, growers, packing, transporters, value-adding, distributing, retailing, shopping, food preparation) from production to consumption. By focusing on a single commodity, a researcher can gauge the processes that lend the most added value, and the degrees of power yielded by differently positioned agents.

The global commodity chain (GCC) is a conceptual approach that adheres closely to the political economy perspective. In the GCC approach (see for example Gereffi, 1994 and 1999; Gereffi, Spencer, and Bair 2002; Raynolds, 1994; Gwynne, 1998) attention is drawn primarily to the unequal relations between core and periphery regions, where the periphery is the site of production and the core is often the site of privileged consumption. Large and powerful agri-food corporations originating from the core take every opportunity to exploit lax environmental and labour laws in the periphery.

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[3] The extent to which the process of globalisation is understood as unidirectional and complete varies among authors writing in the political economy tradition.

Analytical focus in this approach is centred on the power and profit-making practices of each separate node, with the most consideration given to those nodes that occupy the centre of the commodity chain -- buyers, processors, distributors and retailers -- where the actors have been found to be most powerful. Indeed, research suggests that in many chains power is shifting towards retailers, designers and marketers especially in vegetable, fruit and garment chains. In order to differentiate such chains from those associated with autos or aircraft where manufacturers seem to hold the balance of power, Gary Gereffi and Miguel Korzeniewicz, (1994) distinguish between buyer and producer-driven chains. Later GCC analyses draw significantly on this distinction in uncovering the extent to which, for example, retailers (buyer-driven) are able to shape practices, knowledges, and conditions throughout the chain. Chain governance is therefore given a lot of attention in GCC analyses.

The *filière* tradition in commodity chain analyses is less closely linked with one theoretical tradition. Instead, it was developed as a 'neutral' tool, which the French used to analyse food systems (which typically revolved around separate commodities such as cocoa, coffee and cotton) and influence economic policy in their ex-colonies (Raikes, Jensen and Ponte, 2000: 403-04). In this tradition, particular attention is given to institutional agents, since the French have been interested in maintaining interventionist structures, such as marketing boards, in the face of liberalisation. Indeed, the *filière* approach differs from that of the GCC in its focus on public institutions and the **regulation** of marketing, trade, and consumption. Whereas GCC analyses tend to be global in scope, *filière* research is often concerned with local and national arenas (Raikes, Jensen and Ponte, 2000). Characterising the *filière* tradition is most difficult; it can

hardly be considered a unified approach. Price formation, understanding the dynamics of different markets, and investigating relations of exchange, distribution, and production have also been concerns of those contributing to the literature on the *filière* (Bernstein, 1996).

Criticisms of the GCC and *filière* approaches have been elaborated primarily by theorists and researchers concerned with incorporating elements of 'the cultural turn' to the study of food systems. Such critiques call for (among others) closer attention to the realm of consumption, the incorporation of symbolic and cultural analyses, and reconsideration of the coherency and power assigned to 'nodes' and agents. For example, authors such as David Goodman and Melanie Dupuis, 2002, Goodman, 2001, Deborah Leslie and Suzanne Reimer, 1999 are critical of the modernist ontology through which commodities are understood to follow a linear trajectory with a distinct origin and end. This modernist approach, which focuses on understanding reality through analyses of material flows, reinforces a divide between production and consumption, and nature and society. From within the political economy perspective Elaine Hartwick (1996) suggests that the practices and symbolism surrounding nodes of consumption and the articulation between chains have been overlooked in commodity chain analyses. Adrian Smith et al. (2002) have criticised the GCC approach for its privileging of the global over local and regional (subnational) scales and for Gereffi's dualistic typology that posits commodity chains as either buyer or producer-driven.

Both the systems of provision (SOP) and commodity circuits approaches to commodity chain analyses have departed somewhat from the production-centred focus of the GCC and filière traditions. Indeed, Ben Fine and Ellen Leopold's (1993) SOP was

elaborated within the field of consumption studies. Fine and Leopold's main challenge to those writing about consumption is to insist that horizontal analyses, which tend to generalise characteristics across commodities, be supplemented and/or replaced by vertical analyses. Vertical examinations focus on each specific commodity or on groups of commodities with the goal of understanding consumption through an awareness of the ways in which it is linked to production and moderated through systems of distribution, retailing, cultural meanings, and others (Fine and Leopold, 1993: 4). Not only is food differently articulated than other commodities such as garments or furniture, but different foods have distinct organic make-ups, material histories and varied cultural significances. For example:

> Despite the general trend towards the dominance of superstore shopping, the impact on what is available and what is purchased is different from product to product. And, to unravel those differences, it is necessary to acknowledge the differences in the way that foods are provided to retailers and consumed by their customers (Fine, 1993: 151).

The SOP approach calls for the rejection of disciplinary analyses which tend to consider one factor of consumption (for example, marketing, symbolic meaning, retailing, or household budgeting) as more influential than and separate from all others. Not only does the SOP tradition reject the reification of one factor of consumption, but Fine and Leopold also acknowledge that commodities are composed of both symbolic and material factors, thus recognising the importance of the production process:

> There is then a complex and shifting relation between the two aspects of the use value of a commodity – its physical content and its interpretation. Too often this complex relationship has been treated too one-sidedly. Those focusing narrowly on consumption alone tend to examine the meaning of commodities to consumers…On the other hand, there are those whose concern is primarily with the quality and cost of the commodity (Fine and Leopold, 1993: 26).

While the goals of the SOP tradition are sound, criticisms tend to highlight the inability of SOP analyses to fully carry these out. For example, while Fine and Leopold identify the organic qualities of food [it is derived from and reincorporated back into (human) nature] as a factor that distinguishes it from clothing systems, they fail to establish how these qualities have affected the development of specific SOPs. Instead, Fine and Leopold point to structural conditions in the food system (like the profit motive), which encourage substitution and adulteration, and thus limit organic determination (Goodman, 1999: 2). Other critiques (see Lockie and Kitto, 2000: 5, Glennie and Thrift, 1993) emphasise that Fine and Leopold continue to privilege a few causal factors over others, despite that they take into account more processes and actors than either the GCC or filière approaches. Paul Glennie and Nigel Thrift (1993) charge that SOP analyses neglect the interactions between commodity systems and the ways that consumers are part of the process of the symbolic construction of the commodity. Indeed, while Fine and Leopold outline the myriad cultural and material factors located within the field of food consumption, they seem to conclude that factors located outside of the sphere of consumption (production, processing, distributing, etc.) play the most important part in determining practices of consumption. As Glennie and Thrift (1993: 603) explain, although vertical analyses may be essential to complete understandings of commodities and consumption, they do not singularly provide an entire picture. Attention to horizontal factors, symbolic constructions, interactions between systems and effects of advertisement are also important pieces of the 'bigger' picture.

The commodity circuits approach to commodity chain analysis goes a bit further than that of SOP in fully considering the role of consumption in food chains. Ian Cook

and Philip Crang (1996) are credited with the development of the circuits of culinary culture approach which they adapted from Richard Johnson's (1986) notion of circuits of culture. Where Johnson was primarily concerned with flows of values and information in the consumption of media, Cook and Crang focused on both flows of information/knowledge and on (material) flows of food and food technologies (Cook and Crang, 1996). The intention was to provide an analysis that combined both political economic and cultural approaches to food. This was to be achieved:

> Not so much through emphasizing the cultural contexts of economic practice...nor the cultural representations of the economic...but rather through a focus on the *cultural materialization of the economic*, such that the cultural is increasingly what is economically produced, circulated and consumed (134). [emphasis in original]

In opposition to Fine and Leopold's focus on vertical analyses, Cook and Crang insisted on the utility of circuitous treatments of food systems. They feared that preoccupation with depth, origin, and the thickening of vertical connections alone results in the "evacuation" of the realm of consumption (Cook and Crang, 1996, Crang, 1996). Instead, they preferred to attend to commodity surfaces, and promoted a politics of consumption that would include "roughing up" commodity surfaces by juxtaposing "displaced fragments of consumer worlds" (Crang, 1996: 58). In this context, consumers are neither passive nor uncritical in their consumption of circulating knowledges. In fact, they are part of the processes of knowledge construction, and therefore, able to disrupt information that is put into circulation by retailers, advertisers and others. Juxtaposition can involve, for example:

> Counterposing surfaces from different moments and places in a commodity's biography, not claiming any as more real, but disrupting their separation from each other. Significant absences could be made present, [and] supposed heres and theres could be juxtaposed (Cook and Crang, 1996: 47).

As Leslie and Reimer (1999: 407) caution, the circuits of culinary culture approach has the potential to draw attention away from questions of exploitation and power in the food system. Such a caution is echoed by Peter Jackson (2002) who is drawn to the more complex and less dualistic conceptualisations of cultural change characteristic of circuit (rather than vertical) analyses but fears that the backgrounding of questions of exploitation may work to the advantage of capital. Indeed, Cook, Crang and Mark Thorpe's (2000) work on the construction of authenticity in 'ethnic' foods in Britain provides an eloquent deconstruction of the notion of any coherent origin with regards to culinary ingredients, knowledges, technologies or practices. However, although they initially and superficially acknowledge that concerns over authenticity and origins are part of a strategy to maintain social boundaries based on ethnicity, they do not build such arguments into their analysis.

Although elaborated as criticisms of the GCC approach, a number of Smith et al. (2002) critiques can be extended to commodity chain analyses more generally. Smith et al. highlight that commodity chain analyses produce an understanding of a disctinct inside and a separate outside. In this conceptualisation, external processes and actors are theorised as not having much impact on the processes which are considered internal to chains. In particular, Smith et al. (2002: 46-47) are concerned that commodity chain analyses neglect the role of the state and its capacity to affect practices located within the chain through, for example, safety regulations, labour laws, and trade regulations. They also criticise commodity chain studies for paying too little attention to labour processes at the intra-firm level. For example, it is argued that the presence of organised labour does influence decision-making within and between countries. A final criticism, that similarly

applies to a variety of commodity chain analyses, questions whether the commodity is always an appropriate unit of analysis. Peter Gibbon (2003) highlights that there are sometimes multiple chains in single commodities. This is particularly relevant to food commodities where, for example, the chain associated with organically produced bananas may be organised completely differently than that of conventionally produced bananas. Also, bananas destined for North America can be understood as belonging to a different commodity chain than those destined for Europe, especially if the buyers demand drastically different specifications.

Actor-Network Theory

Actor-network theory (ANT) is a framework that has recently been adopted, critiqued, and modified in the study of food systems. The development of ANT was initiated in the social studies of science and technology and is credited primarily to Michel Callon, Bruno Latour and John Law. The primary goal of these early ANT theorists was to challenge Western scientific epistemology wherein agency is solidly vested in 'objective' scientists whose responsibility it is to report on the objects of their experiments. Early works by Callon (1986) and Latour (1983), instead suggested that scientific experiments and projects (like all other endeavors) relied on the building of networks of people, documents, laws, and other animate and inanimate objects. This building of networks was not a process through which humans acted on other humans and objects, but rather a process through which each 'actor' became enrolled. Thus, these early works took into account the role that bacteria (in the case of Latour's case study of

Pasteur's laboratory) and scallops (in the case of Callon's study of fishermen and scientists' attempts to restore fish stocks) played in specific projects or networks[4].

In relation to the study of food systems, ANT is unlike any of the theoretical traditions outlined above. Perhaps most importantly, for the purposes of this thesis, ANT puts forth the conceptualisation of networks (instead of chains) for understanding the organisation of all action and flows. Whereas chains have distinct origins (production) and endpoints (consumption), networks are non-linear and consist of relations or associations (Murdoch, 1997a) of heterogeneous entities (i.e. actors) through which materials, information/knowledges and discourses flow. Rather than privileging the realm of consumption or production as the locus of reality, ANT is exercised by following the actors via the networks which give them the capacity to perform agency. This following is to be done without *a priori* assumptions about who drives and who is driven (Murdoch, 1997a: 334) since, according to ANT, power is relational and is not located in specific sites or actors, but rather, is expressed when an actor or site is able to bring other actors or sites into line with its aims. ANT proposes a similar perspective about knowledge. According to Alex Hughes (2000: 182), knowledges are not assumed to belong to particular nodes, but rather, are relational. That is, they circulate among nodes in networks and are part of the process of (re)formulating the character of the nodes and the relationships between them.

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[4] These two works were not only focused on the role of bacteria and scallops. Rather, Latour is centrally concerned with the power accorded to science (and scientists) in Western society. Through a case study of Pasteur's work on the development and control of an anthrax vaccine, Latour traces how farmers and bacteria come to be enrolled in this network. He highlights that Pasteur's experiments relied on a plethora of "actors" that extended beyond his laboratory. Callon was similarly interested in the way that scientists in Northern France established scientific knowledge as the only means to increasing fish stocks. In attempting to increase fish stocks scientists, fishermen and scallops need to be successfully enrolled. In this case, however, the scallops undermined the network by refusing to attach themselves to the collectors; the network was thus dismantled.

So, actor-network theorists attempt to be non-participants in the structure, agency debate. Where the political economy perspective focuses on the structural conditions of capitalism, which make it theoretically difficult for actors to act outside of its effects, and the circuits of culinary culture approach assigns individual consumers with the capacity to draw attention to the ways in which knowledges about food are circulated by 'roughening' up surfaces, ANT is instead concerned with the networks of associations through which specific (capitalist) endeavours are played out, or with the entities mobilised by a consumer in their practice of resistance. For instance, actor-network theorists approach the capitalism of Karl Marx not as totalising, but rather as "a skein of somewhat longer networks that rather inadequately embrace a world on the basis of points that become centres of profit and calculation" (Latour, 1993: 121).

Central to ANT is the deconstruction of and opposition to all binaries. "Actor-network [theory] is, [and] has been, a semiotic machine for waging war on essential differences" (Law, 1999: 7). ANT follows the post-structuralist tradition of challenging dualisms of which nature/society, structure/agency, and local/global are of particular concern. However, ANT is not solely attentive to linguistic dualisms, as is the case with some versions of post-structuralism. Rather, the semiotics of ANT is one of materiality. "It takes the semiotic insight, that of the relationality of entities, the notion that they are produced in relations, and applies this ruthlessly to all materials" (Law, 1999: 4). In this sense, ANT does not ignore that divisions have come to exist, but insists that there is nothing essential about them; they are outcomes of various relational practices and networks.

Actor-network theorists have been particularly interested in the ways in which humans have constructed an ontological divide between themselves as humans and all other entities as nonhumans. This process is explained in detail by Latour (1993) where he argues that the "modern constitution" encourages a process of "purification" in which a total separation between nature and culture is practiced. The separation of nature and society is thus the outcome of certain network practices that (have) become stabilised over time. Despite, or more precisely *because* of the moderns' work of purification, the proliferation of nature/culture hybrids has gone unnoticed and unchecked; humans have increasingly enrolled non-humans into their networks while insisting that non-humans are objective and separate from humans. As Latour (1993: 12) suggests, "the more we forbid ourselves to conceive of hybrids, the more possible their interbreeding becomes".

For Latour, hybrids are neither purely social, nor purely natural, nor a combination of purely social and purely natural entities. He offers phenomena such as ozone holes and deforestation as examples of hybrids which are both the work of nature and humans; they are collective endeavors in which properties are exchanged. 'Moderns,' however, do not acknowledge the hybrid nature of such examples and instead explain these phenomena as the outcome of humans acting in and on their nonhuman, objective surroundings. The notion of nature/culture hybrids has been an effective tool for those studying agriculture and food, in particular it has been used in conceptualising the nature of more recent agricultural 'actors' – namely genetically modified organisms (see for example Whatmore, 1997 and 2002; Busch and Juska, 1997; Goodman, 1999 and 2001). Other actor-network theorists have concentrated on the human/technology divide, similarly arguing that what is commonly considered social is not purely social at all (see

for example Nick Bingham, 1996 and the collection of essays in Law, 1991a). Such

authors highlight the ways in which people work in and through technologies (and other

entities), and thus live in a socio-technical world (Law, 1991b).

As Latour describes them, hybrids are quasi-objects. They are not simply screens

onto which society projects itself, nor are they so 'hard' that they determine the structure

of society. Rather, they are at the same time social, fabricated, collective, real,

nonhuman, and objective (Latour, 1993: 55). Quasi-objects, like all entities in networks

have the potential to perform agency. Agency is not a property vested in humans, or any

other entities, rather it is collectively performed through associations. It is a network

effect, thus no entities possess it *a priori*. In order for one actor to perform an action, the

others in the network must also act. Thus, actors are always also networks (Callon, 1991:

142); they are provided with subjectivity, intentionality, consciousness, etc. through their

association with other entities. In this sense, ANT's conceptualisation of agency is one of

relationality:

> Subjectivity, corporeality, is no more a property of humans, of individuals, of
> intentional subjects, than being an outside reality is a property of
> nature...Subjectivity seems also to be a circulating capacity, something that is
> partially gained or lost by *hooking up to* certain bodies of practice (Latour, 1999:
> 22). [emphasis added]

Although actors are always also networks, networks consist of more than just

actors; they are also made of intermediaries. When a network begins to form there is no

distinction between actors and intermediaries, rather this distinction comes into effect as

the network is stabilised (Murdoch, 1997a: 331). An "actor is any entity [human or non-

human] able to associate texts, humans, non-humans and money...[It] is an intermediary

that puts other intermediaries into circulation...[A]n actor is an author" (Callon, 1991:

140-141). Intermediaries, on the other hand, are entities that describe and give form to their networks; they can be human, non-human, technological and hybrid (Callon, 1991: 135). Actors and intermediaries are not always stable entities, that is, an actor can become an intermediary at any time, and an intermediary can take on the role of an actor without notice. Furthermore, the ascription of actor or intermediary status is dependent on the unit of analysis. For example, an actor in one network is probably an intermediary in another network.

This de-centring of agency, which is at the heart of actor-network theorisations, calls for a close examination of the ways in which 'non-humans' participate in the 'human' world (which is conceptualised as not purely human at all). In this respect, applications of ANT have tended to focus either on the role that natures or the role that technologies play in networks. The notion of nature as agent has been taken up in a collection of essays by Sarah Whatmore (2002), by Stassart and Whatmore (2003), Lawrence Busch and Arunas Juska (1997), Goodman (1999 and 2001) and others. These authors borrow frequently from the works of Latour and Law in drawing attention to the materiality of nature, wherein nature is actively involved in network practices and is not simply a human production. In particular, these works highlight the ways in which nature resists and escapes the human intentions of agriculture, thus forcing the building of new and different networks. Although nature sometimes acts as an intermediary in networks, framing, defining and configuring (inter)action, it is clear that nature also has the potential to perform actions as an author or actor in forcing the collapse and re-building of new networks that enroll new entities. For example, in the case of food scares (see for example Stassart and Whatmore, 2003, Goodman, 1999), bacteria such as bovine

spongiform encephalophy (BSE) and Escherichia coli (E. coli) demand the re-making of networks so that several new actors and intermediaries are enrolled. Such novel actors and intermediaries include a variety of regulatory and political institutions, scientists who must work to prevent or destroy the 'rogue' bacteria, technologies that can trace bacteria, advertising personnel who must work at restoring consumer confidence, and many more. In such examples, humans are enlisted as a direct consequence of the bacteria's actions.

Donna Haraway is another author that has sought to conceptualise the agency of nature in 'social' life. She claims not to adhere to ANT, and rather, classifies herself in the field of feminist techno-science. However, these two streams borrow from each other readily and have much in common. Much of Haraway's work is devoted to developing representations (or figurations as she calls them) of hybridity. Similar to actor-network theorists she is committed to the deconstruction of binaries such as object/subject, organism/machine, and nature/culture. In this spirit, she uses a coyote or trickster figure to represent nature as (an) active subject(s) capable of resisting human intention (1991: 199-201)[5]. The coyote figure is an explicit disruption of "nature/culture ontologies" (Haraway, 2004: 328). As Haraway explains, nature is neither the sole production of humans, nor is it pre-existent and unchangeable. Rather, it is a co-production in which non-humans play an important part, and are not simply objects to be manipulated by humans.

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[5] Haraway's coyote figures less prominently than her cyborg, oncomouse, or companion species (dog) figurations. In regards to nature, Haraway seems to be more interested in hybridity than agency (although she does also write on agency, as suggested above). Much of her treatment of nature is focused on the organism/machine dualism. She argues that entities are increasingly cyborg figures i.e. human-animal-machine hybrids. The distinction between animate and inanimate entities is becoming blurred. Nature also figures into her discussion about scientific method, in a similar way as in Latour (1993). Here Haraway is concerned with the manner in which scientific practices and discourses treat nature as manipulable, inert matter.

Like actor-network theorists such as Law (1999), Haraway (1991: 200) depicts all objects (including nature) as involving both semiotic and material dimensions. For Haraway "[t]here is no gap between materiality and semiosis; the meaning-making processes and the materiality of the world are dynamic, historical, contingent, [and] specific" (1995: 509). This "material-semiotic actor" conceptualisation is politically useful since it bridges two often irreconcilable positions. On the one hand the notion of material-semiotic actor highlights that objects/actors/subjects have a 'real' physicality or materiality, while on the other hand it recognises, that objects are in part constructed through boundary-making processes in social interaction. Furthermore, the insight insists that conceptual and material construction must be analysed together as relational processes. As a framework through which to study food, ANT may be a nice compromise between the perspectives outlined earlier. A point of congruence between the political economy perspective and the 'material-semiotic' insight may lie in their insistence that the natural world constrains and enables human action through its materiality. However, in actor-network theorisations nature's materiality is not objective, pre-existent nor subservient to human interests and actions.[6] ANT is also compatible with elements of those frameworks that have striven to incorporate the cultural turn, such as SOP and commodity circuits. In this respect, ANT agrees that materials are not static entities; they are defined and constructed through their relations with other actors and intermediaries. The study of consumption and the meaning of commodities is thus not

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[6] Noel Castree (2002), working toward a synthesis of ANT and Marxist insights, points out that actor-network theorists may have overstated the difference between the two approaches to the study of nature. In the political economy of agriculture there are a number of authors who work towards non-dualistic theorisations that posit humans as part of nature and recognise the ways in which various natures are active in the world (see for example Duncan, 1996).

outside of the scope of ANT. However, ANT engages in such studies without losing sight of the "thingness" (Latour, 2000) of the actors under inquiry.

While ANT is compatible with certain elements of the perspectives outlined earlier in this chapter, its conceptualisation of nature as an agent is unique. Writings following in the Marxist and political economic traditions have paid attention to the non-human realm, but have (until more recently) presented it as fundamentally separate from humans, or as an inert resource to be studied outside of the realm of social science. Noel Castree (2002), who endeavours to combine the insights of eco-marxism and ANT, finds that even in newer, more concerted attempts to develop a "green" Marxism (Altvater, 1993; O'Connor, 1998) the nature-society dualism remains at the centre of analyses. While such authors as Neil Smith (1998), David Harvey (1996) and Erik Swyndgedouw (1999) are a little more successful in challenging nature-society binaries, according to Castree, their all-encompassing theorisations of capitalist logic (and the humans that drive it) leave little room for a theory of resistance from non-humans.[7] Indeed, Busch and Juska (1997) who have attempted to understand agriculture and food through an amalgamation of ANT and political economy state that "in the political economy of agriculture nature is usually seen as passive. It is the backdrop behind the stage on which the human drama is conducted" (691). While political economists have written about humans as part of nature, have sought to understand how nature constrains and enables production, and have developed profoundly ecological thought, there is still a sense that

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[7] In a 2003 article on power relations in industrial clothing clusters in Slovakia, Adrian Smith also works towards an analysis that combines a political economy perspective with a 'weak' version of ANT. Smith is less concerned about the agency of nature, but is similarly critical of the way that political economy leaves little room for a nuanced and fluid understanding of power relations.

agency is associated with intentionality, or at least that the capacity to act intentionally is more important (Bingham, 1996; Castree, 2002).

Asymmetrical conceptualisations of nature/society are also found in (other) commodity chain approaches. While Fine and Leopold, in their SOP analyses, do point to the materiality of the organic content of food, this is done without according nature any real agency. The ways in which nature is able to resist human agricultural efforts is not theorised, and instead attention is given to the ways in which capital is able to overcome organic constraints through practices of substitution and adulteration. Similarly, Cook and Crang's (1996) attempts to bridge political economy and cultural approaches through their circuits of culinary culture approach leaves no room for an understanding of the active role of nature or other 'things'. Their focus on the "cultural *materialization* of the economic" does little more than acknowledge that entities other than discourses and symbolic representations exist in the 'social' world.

Geographers have been especially enthusiastic about actor-network theory's contribution to the understanding of space and scale. ANT is particularly useful in breaking down such binaries as global/local, rural/urban and production/consumption that have become firmly entrenched in the study of food and agriculture. The understanding that all actors and actions are organised and made possible through networks not only serves to decentralise agency (as explained above), but also to re-conceptualise notions of space and scale. As Latour (1993) explains, the network conceptualisation disrupts the totalising and universalising effect of conceiving of the world as comprising sleek, unified surfaces:

> [N]etworks...are [conceptually similar to] nets thrown over spaces, and they retain only a few scattered elements of those spaces. They are connected lines,

not surfaces. They are by no means comprehensive, global or systematic, even though they embrace surfaces without covering them, and extend a very long way (118).

Through this perspective, space is understood as topological rather than flat allowing for more complex geographies that include, for example, overlaps, folds and rifts (Murdoch, 1998).

As with their insistence on not prescribing *a priori* status to actors, actor-network theorists see space (and time) as relational, and as subject to (re)configuration through networks. Although the materials that enter into networks have their own 'space-time trajectories,' they become (re)constructed through the drawing together of 'things' in networks (Murdoch, 1998: 361). In this sense, actors and processes are not essentially local or global, rural or urban, but rather, part of networks that undergo dynamic processes of lengthening and shortening through the enrolment (or dropping out) of variously positioned actors. Actors, who are commonly conceived as 'global actors,' such as corporations or international bureaucracies, are really not global at all:

> Rather, their reach depends upon intricate interweavings of *situated* people, artifacts, codes, and living things and the maintenance of particular tapestries of connection across the world. Such processes and patterns of connection are not reducible to a single logic or determinant interest lying somewhere *outside* or *above* the social fray (Whatmore and Thorne, 1997: 288) [emphasis in original].

In other words, these seemingly 'global' actors rely on the same processes, resources and entities as those functioning in the 'local' arena. Thus, ANT calls for the dismantling of stable and predetermined definitions of local and global actors and arenas. Rather than conceiving of local and global as ontologically distinct categories, ANT understands these phenomena as constructions of single networks. Whereas scale, in such perspectives as GCC, is conceptualised hierarchically, or ladder-like (where local is the

bottom and global is the top rung), in ANT, paths from local to global are continuous and organised through networks. Networks may, therefore, be simultaneously local and global. Regardless of their length or reach, they touch down at a multitude of local points. As long as actor-network theorists follow the "seamless" paths of networks no change of scale is needed (Murdoch, 1998: 362).

Such a conceptualisation of scale calls into question contemporary theorisations of the process of globalisation. Some modernist studies and theories contribute to the reification of 'global' (corporate) actors and structures by portraying them as centres of virtually absolute power (Busch and Juska, 1997; Lockie and Kitto, 2000:10). Furthermore, they explain the process of globalisation as a nearly irreversible trajectory of capitalist expansion. As Busch and Juska (1997) suggest, in political economic accounts of agriculture entities such as 'the state' and 'multinational corporations' are awarded agency without recognition of the multitude of humans and non-humans who give them the capacity to, and through which they legislate, exploit, and extend their reach. ANT, however, treats 'global' actors, structures and processes in the same way as it treats all others, and attempts to trace the networks that enable them to perform action. In this sense, globalisation is theorised like all other processes; it is one of network building and lengthening and also of network shortening and collapsing. Since the success of networks is dependent on all their constituent actors and performative roles, they are subject to crises, strain and even failure. Thus, the process of globalisation can be thought of as "partial, uneven, and unstable; a socially contested rather than logical process in which many spaces of resistance, alterity, and possibility become analytically discernible and politically meaningful" (Whatmore and Thorne, 1997: 289). J. K.

Gibson-Graham (2002) argue that indeed there exist many spaces and alternative economies of resistance within the so called globalised world, but that the language and knowledge needed to put them into discourse is lacking. Since discourse not only reflects, but also produces reality, these authors argue that more and different language is needed in order to properly represent and further construct the diversity of practices and economic relations that exist the world over. Such a project would help to challenge the notion of a completely globalised, capitalist world.

The ANT conceptualisation of globalisation does not suggest that networks can not be made durable, extend their reach through space via the enrolment of new entities, or be dominated by one or a collective of actors. Rather than focusing on the ways in which, for example, multinational corporations 'act' and dominate, ANT understands such corporations as networks, and investigates which and how entities within such networks become centres of power. While ANT assigns all entities the capacity to perform action in networks, it does recognise that actors sometimes act as authors, prescribing the conditions of enrolment and determining the shape of others (Murdoch, 1998: 362). Especially in longer networks, 'centres' manage to 'act-at-a-distance' through the enrolment of a series of entities, such as laws, documents and living entities that allow networks to persist over time. Lengthened networks are more hybrid in the sense that their success depends on a greater mix of human and non-human entities (Gouveia, 1997: 307). Networks are made durable if entities do not reject their enrolment.

In the study of food systems, ANT is also used to support the dismantling of rural (production)/ urban (consumption) dichotomies. ANT understands rural and urban not as

pure and separate spaces but rather as co-determined through seamless networks. Where the perspectives outlined at the beginning of this chapter tend to give primacy to either production or consumption processes, ANT promises a symmetrical treatment of such spaces and scales. Its conceptualisation of the process of globalization allows theoretical room for practices of resistance, since globalisation is understood as partial and contested; and 'global' actors are posited as dependent on the complicity of local, situated, and active entities. Furthermore, ANT's commitment to not assigning agency or power *a priori* leaves room for new and more particular examinations of practices and spaces of domination and resistance.

Criticisms of ANT

At least two main themes can be found in criticisms elaborated about actor-network theory. The first criticism has been mounted by scholars who are fairly sympathetic to the goals and ontological positions of ANT, but who find ANT methodologically weak. This first critique focuses on the inability of ANT to carry out, in empirical studies, a truly symmetrical treatment of humans and non-humans. This position was most forcefully presented by Harry M. Collins and Steven Yearley (1992). With regards to Callon's 1986 paper, which (symmetrically) granted agency to the scallops of St. Brieuc Bay, Collins and Yearley charge:

> The analysts remain in control the whole time, which makes their imposition of symmetry on the world seem something of a conceit. Would not complete symmetry require an account from the point of view of the scallops? Would it be sensible to think of the scallops enrolling the scallop researchers so as to given (sic.) themselves a better home and to protect their species from the ravages of the fishermen (313).

Collins and Yearley are also concerned that social scientists do not possess the skills necessary to understand the non-human world; therefore, so-called symmetrical accounts must rely on pre-established scientific knowledge. Other authors (see for example Lockie and Kitto, 2000; Murdoch, 1997) offer less harsh critiques, but remain unconvinced that ANT studies have been able to deliver the 'symmetrical' analyses (i.e. those that do not prioritise the 'social' over the 'natural') that they suggest are needed. In the end, the same actors and processes figuring in other contemporary frameworks tend to be at the centre of ANT analyses.

In a response, Callon and Latour (1992) argue that Collins and Yearley cannot sympathise with ANT because they have fallen into a modernist understanding of nature where:

> [E]ither the scallops are out there and force themselves on naïve realists, or they are in there made of social relations of humans talking about them… With this divide of the data [Collins and Yearley] entirely forget that scallops exist under various forms at the same time (probably none of them resembles 'out-thereness') and that all the scientists are busy *not* limiting their discussion to social relations but devise hundreds of ways…to mobilize the various forms of scallops (353). [Emphasis in original.]

Callon and Latour further explain that their conceptualisation of the agency of 'things' was not meant to extend intentionality to the non-human world, nor to characterise humans as mechanical (1992: 353). Whether the non-human world acts intentionally or not, the main concern of actor-network theorists is in highlighting that non-humans do act. Their actions help shape networks that are made of heterogeneous entities. As Callon and Latour point out, it is ridiculous to assume that social scientists can only understand the human/social since no relations are purely social or human. The study of

the non-human should not be left to scientists alone since entities are hybrids of social and natural phenomena and relations.

The more legitimate of the above critiques is perhaps ANT's inability thus far to achieve in empirical research the symmetry it proposes through theory. In part this can be attributed to the non-human world not speaking in a language that humans can understand. Perhaps higher levels of symmetry could be reached if humans became more sensitive to understanding the (communicative) ways in which, as Latour (2000) puts it, "things strike back". In this sense ANT is also a methodological tool in that it helps researchers remain open (by not prescribing entities with essential capabilities and attributes) to the activities and influences of the material world. Certainly, it is important for future ANT studies to strive for higher levels of symmetry.

ANT has also been charged (in a similar way as have been other post-structuralist theories) with being too relativistic and losing sight of questions of power, domination and justice. Indeed, authors such as Terry Marsden (2000), suggest that ANT is 'agnostic' with regards to the distribution of power in (agri-food) networks. Marsden contends that contemporary ANT studies of (alternative) "actor projects" rely too much on description and fail to answer the more important questions about which projects succeed or fail and why. In order to understand the success of food projects, Marsden (2000) argues, one needs to acknowledge "existing and dominant power relations in food and other networks" (27). Authors such as Hughes (2000) have been successful at incorporating this criticism into their analyses. In a study on UK retailers' role in shaping the international cut flower trade, Hughes presents UK retailers as a powerful force driving the flower network. She, however, incorporates insights from ANT and

commodity circuits to argue that "it is the way in which they [the retailers] manipulate complex networks of consumers, designers and actors in supporting commodity channels that allows them effectively to practise this control" (Hughes, 2000: 188). Here power is theorised not as inherent to certain nodes in a network, but as enabled and performed through various practices such as the circulation of knowledges and the compliance of consumers.

Jonathan Murdoch (1997b), identifies the feminist techno-science critique of ANT as being of particular importance. In a 1991 essay on being allergic to onions, Susan Leigh Star asks: "Who carries the cost of distribution, and what is the nature of the personal in network theory" (44)? Star argues that when networks become standardised, they become alienating to those who do not fit the standard. While networks may become stabilised there are always those left out, thus, "no networks are stabilized or standardized for everyone. Not even McDonald's" (44). For these reasons, Star advocates for beginning ANT analyses from points of (multiple) marginality (that is, with the experiences of women, transsexuals, ethnic minorities and other marginal peoples). Such people are in unique positions since they are "permanently escaping, subverting, but nevertheless in relationship with the standardized" (39). Donna Haraway is similarly concerned that ANT may overlook questions of race, class, gender and others that, she argues, are at the centre of scientific and technological networks (Murdoch, 1997b: 748).

It is true that few ANT analyses have explicitly focused on more traditional axes of inequality associated with critical social theory. However, this does not necessarily suggest that ANT lacks the theoretical tools needed to address such issues. Rather, it seems that since ANT is a relatively new framework, actor-network theorists have been

most interested in highlighting the ways in which the perspective strays from more conventional critical theories. Thus, much of the ANT literature focuses on understanding hybridity, dismantling modernist dichotomies, de-centring agency, and contesting the process of globalisation (as reviewed above). It is, however, false that actor-network theorisations are not concerned with questions of domination, power and justice. Rather, ANT refuses to define certain actors, processes and structures *a priori* as totally and essentially powerful or dominated. Busch and Juska (1997) suggest that ANT is particularly able:

> [T]o raise issues of distributive justice in places where neither the classical nor the critical version of political economy[8] recognizes them...Both classical and critical political economy may help us to identify the distribution of such goods, but they do little to help us understand how or why the goods are distributed in particular ways (694-95).

For these (and other) reasons, Busch and Juska propose that critical political economy and ANT be used together so that a broader understanding of justice may be achieved.

Questions of power and domination have also been addressed by various actor-network theorists in the 1991 edited book *A Sociology of Monsters: Essays on Power, Technology and Domination*. Indeed, Law and Latour, in this volume, both conceptualise power and domination as network effects of stabilised relations. "When actors and points of view are aligned, then we enter a stable definition of society that looks like domination" (Latour, 1991: 129). Law (1991c) disagrees with standpoint epistemologies where women, the working class, or other minorities are understood as having distinct knowledge and ways of knowing attributable to their experiences on the margins. However, he is sympathetic, especially to feminist projects that analyse the experiences

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[8] Here "classical political economy" refers to that set of frameworks used in classical economics and developed by liberal economists such as Adam Smith, while "critical political economy" refers to frameworks following in Marxist and other critical traditions.

of the less-powerful. Indeed, he suggests that ANT has been too fixated on following powerful actors. Actor-network theorists should begin to investigate marginal actor-networks with more rigour.

Actor-network theorists are not lacking the theoretical tools to investigate relations of power. Indeed, they understand that networks can and do become dominated by one or a few actors that form centres of calculation. They also recognise that power is achieved by actors who are successful in the enrolment and alignment of other actors. Thus actors do dominate networks, but domination is not predetermined, and it is reliant on the complicity of the other actors and intermediaries in networks and on exchanges of knowledges between sites. Some actors are able to stabilise networks for long periods of time, making it difficult for the other actors to break free from the network. In the words of Murdoch (1997):

> ANT does not qualify as a 'critical theory' but we should recognize that it undoubtedly performs a critical task: through the pursuit of a nondualistic reassessment of our circumstances, ANT provides the basis upon which a symmetrical social theory can be brought into productive interaction with other human and nonhuman worlds (753).

Similary, ANT breaks with traditional conceptualisations of gender, race, class, etc., that are at the centre of 'critical theory' but this does not suggest that it does not perform a valuable critical task. Rather, it suggests that some of these more traditional categories are now fragmented; they are cross-cut by other axes of inequality.

Alternative Food Networks/Projects

The purpose of this final section is to review contemporary theorisations of alternative food networks/projects in order to establish a working definition of

'alternative' for this thesis. This is a somewhat challenging task since there has been an artificial separation of alternative food *projects/networks* from alternative *agriculture* in the literature. Most often the two intimately linked topics have been studied separately and by different authors. In the area of alternative food projects/networks, authors have focused most often on alternative marketing schemes such as farmer's markets and community supported agriculture (CSA). In the realm of alternative agriculture, most literature is concerned with organic production. Since my thesis project examines a variety of different food projects/networks that include production, consumption, trade, distribution, rural and urban initiatives, farmers, chefs, and employees of non-governmental organisations a wider definition of 'alternative' is needed so as to establish these projects and actors as conceptually linked.

This project of linking-up a wide range of food networks (including both rural and urban initiatives) has gained the attention of (primarily) European authors who unite these projects through the use of such titles as alternative food *networks* (Whatmore, Stassart, and Renting, 2003; Stassart and Whatmore, 2003; Renting, Marsden and Banks, 2003), alternative food *initiatives* (Allen, et. al., 2003), and alternative food *movements* (Marsden, 2000). These authors, however, use different criteria for establishing the 'alternativeness' of their units of analysis. For example, Whatmore, Stassart and Henk Renting (2003) understand that alternative food networks:

> Share in common…their constitution as/of food markets that redistribute value through the network against the logic of bulk commodity production; that reconvene 'trust' between food producers and consumers; and that articulate new forms of political association and market governance (389).

Stassart and Whatmore (2003), in a case study of the Belgian agricultural cooperative Coprosain, reiterate the prominence of 'trust' in alternative food networks. In this study

they link notions of 'trust' with those of 'quality', which, they argue, become important concerns in the event of food scares. Indeed, other authors such as Sabine O'Hara and Sigrid Stagl (2001) seem to agree: "Alternative movements are an expression of the eroding trust in established markets as well as in established institutions intended to curtail self-organizing markets and make them more accountable and trustworthy" (544). Involvement in alternative food networks helps to re-establish feelings of trust among participants. For example, face-to-face interactions between food actors, and knowledge about growing practices and trade relations allow for the performance of trust.

Murdoch, Marsden and Jo Banks (2000) and Renting, Marsden and Banks (2003) are more concerned with the concept of quality than that of trust, however the concepts seem to be closely connected for both sets of authors. According to Murdoch, Marsden and Banks "consumers increasingly are linking notions of food quality to notions of nature in the agro-food system, as though they felt that the higher the natural content of food the less susceptible it will be to malign human interference" (2000: 108). Renting, Marsden and Banks consider quality production as one category of alternative food networks. Such projects usually involve formally established (rather than face-to-face) guarantees of quality such as fair-trade, protected origin, or eco brands and labeling. Quality conventions, as these authors point out, are usually associated with a specific farm or region (which gives them a 'local' rather than 'global' flavour) and with 'natural' inputs and practices.

Indeed, alternative food networks/projects/movements are perhaps most commonly conceptualised as *local* alternatives to the *global* industrialised system of production. Renting, Marsden and Banks (2003) prefer the term short food supply chains (SFSCs)

over alternative food networks (AFNs) to convey precisely such a conceptualisation. SFSCs "'short-circuit' the long anonymous supply chains characteristic of the industrial mode of food production...[and] are an important carrier for the 'shortening' of relations between food production and locality" (398). In fact, these authors argue that SFSCs have the capacity to 'relocalise' or 'respatialise' food as they draw in and on different spaces and actors than do global food chains. Interestingly, these authors do not only consider spatially proximate networks as 'short' food supply chains, although they certainly do highlight this quality in a number of SFSCs. Rather, they also understand that SFSCs can engender "extended relations in time and space. Here products are sold to consumers outside the region of production who may have no personal experience of that locality" (400). In such cases networks that extend beyond the local are still considered 'short' chains since:

> It is not the distance over which a product is transported that is critical, but the fact that it is embedded with value-laden information when it reaches the consumer...This enables the consumer to make connections with the place/space of production and, potentially, with the values of the people involved and production methods employed (400).

Other accounts about the 'localness' of AFNs rely more traditionally on spatial understandings of proximity. For example, O'Hara and Stagl (2001) understand global markets as 'disembedded' from local social, cultural and environmental contexts. For these authors alternative markets "provide a vehicle for re-connecting and re-embedding food markets into their physical/spatial, social and ethical context" (545). With a similar nostalgia for an era which was to have existed before the process of globalisation, Helen La Trobe and Tim Acott (2000) see alternative food projects as having the capacity to undo the social, environmental and economic costs that are symptomatic of global food

chains. Here global food chains are characterised by their considerable and increasing

distance between producers and consumers and people and nature. While Clare Hinrichs

(2000) also identifies local food markets as spaces conducive to the (re)institution of

personal, immediate, and 'embedded' relationships, her main point is to show that these

face-to-face relationships are not necessarily socially just. Rather they are still

constrained by people's economic conditions and self-interest. As Cook and Crang

(1996) point out in their work on commodity circuits, alternative or local chains can still

be drawn into processes of class distinction. 'Localness' is thus not a sufficient criteria in

and of itself for the definition of markets as alternatives to the dominant system.

Patricia Allen et al., (2002) use the term agrifood initiatives (AFIs) to refer to

alternative food systems that strive to be "environmentally sustainable, economically

viable, and socially just" (61). These authors make a distinction between *oppositional*

and *alternative* food initiatives, and argue that for the most part contemporary AFIs in

California have toned down (and even lost) their political opposition to the dominant

system of food production. Opposition to the dominant system is a quality that is valued

by these authors and one that they feel is needed if any significant level of environmental,

economic and social sustainability is to be achieved. Thus, qualities such as 'localness'

are not good indicators of justice since "[d]irectly oppositional stances cannot be

successful when they are only local; they require the power of a broader social movement

to prevail" (74). For Allen et al., the AFIs that are most worthy of support are those that

directly challenge the global capitalist system of production.

In the literature that pertains to the wide variety of alternative food projects, there

seems to be no single set of qualities or criteria through which one can gauge or judge

'alternativeness'. As seen above, researchers and theorists understand the nature of alternative food projects differently; some see them as ways to re-establish relationships of trust, some are interested in notions of quality, many understand locality as central to such projects, and others are interested in the ways in which such projects oppose the dominant system. During the process of choosing my sample, I was most concerned that the projects worked (at least to some degree) outside of dominant systems of food production in Niagara. For the purpose of sample selection I chose to understand 'dominant systems' as those that contained the nodes associated with conventional food chains. Conventional food chains are rather 'long' and include many processes and large firms. On the consumption end, they are typified by supermarkets.

The projects in my sample conformed to at least one of the following characteristics: they used unconventional outlets (i.e. outlets other than supermarkets) to sell their products (for example farmers' markets) or attempted to bypass established markets completely (for example community gardening projects which have very little interaction with any markets). They used organic or ecological methods of production, they attempted to address food insecurity and work with marginal populations, they attempted to draw on the seasonality and local specialties of the Niagara Region, and they attempted to maintain direct relationships between producers and consumers. Thus, for the purposes of this thesis, alternative food projects are those that in some way work outside of (not necessarily in opposition to) dominant food systems which include supermarkets, industrial agriculture, mass-production and consumption, large agri-food firms, food terminals, and transportation of commodities over long distances. Trust and quality are themes that are not at the centre of my analyses in this thesis; however, the

extent to which these projects perform oppositional roles will be discussed in the final section of analysis.

A central method through which the authors above have established the 'alternativeness' of food projects/initiatives is by contrasting them with 'dominant' or 'conventional' food systems. Most authors writing about alternative food projects recognise *a single* dominant food system and *a separate* alternative food system. In this thesis, my application of actor-network theory results in a more complicated and slightly confusing conceptualisation that involves multiple networks and overlapping distinctions. Most importantly, I use the metaphor of networks, rather than systems. According to ANT, reality can be understood as organised into networks, where every actor in a network is itself also a network. Thus, I talk about dominant food networks rather than one single dominant food system. This terminology highlights that 'the dominant food system' is made of multiple food networks. It also emphasises that not all dominant food networks are the same; they may be constrained or enabled by different actors, and may have diverse strategies for success.

In section 3.3, I discuss agri-tourism in Niagara as a network, and show how the projects in my sample are differently linked to this network. Although I use the singular to discuss agri-tourism in Niagara, I do recognise that 'the Niagara agri-tourist network' is made of multiple networks (to which some of the projects in my sample belong) and that not all agri-tourist networks are the same. Finally, I conceptualise each individual project in my sample as a network, rather than referring to just one alternative food system. As I argue in the analysis, alternative food projects in my sample cannot be understood as operating completely separately from dominant food systems or from the

agri-tourist economy. Such a messy conceptualisation may make the reading of this thesis more difficult for those who are accustomed to a clean and neat separation between alternative and dominant food systems. This non-dichotomous understanding -- where networks are multiple and overlapping -- is, however, a more accurate reflection of what I have found in the field.

Chapter 3: Data and Analysis

3.1 Background on the Projects in My Sample

In this short section I provide some basic information about the food projects and actors I have included in my sample. It is meant to give the reader the background needed to contextualise my analysis of the data I collected in the field. A full discussion of the process through which I selected my sample appears in the methodology chapter. My sample was not chosen to be representative of the Niagara Region, nor generaliseable to other regions or contexts outside of the scope of this research. Rather, I simply started with the food projects of which I was aware and included others as I discovered them.

COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE

One of the first people I invited to participate in this study is a community supported agriculture (CSA) farmer. The year 2003 was the sixth year that she has been growing vegetables organically (although her farm is not certified organic) and selling them to her members. When I interviewed her in the spring of 2003 she had just a few members (around five), but at one time had a maximum of twenty-five to thirty. She has approached this maximum again in the 2004 season. Her members sign-up for a twenty week season and receive a basket of vegetables each week. She is particularly interested in heirloom varieties and is involved in saving and exchanging seeds through Seed Savers Exchange. This participant is a social-worker, although in the last few years she has preferred not to pursue full-time employment as she has a young daughter at home during the days and as she works year-round on her gardening. She has a greenhouse that allows

the extension of the growing season, and in the winter months she starts new seeds and prepares for the upcoming year. In the spring of 2003 she (and a few other growers) established a new farmer's market and she now sells some of her produce and seedlings there. She manages her gardens without much help from other family members as her husband works full-time in a local plant.

Community supported agriculture, which originated in Europe and Japan and spread to North America in the mid 1980s, is meant to provide farmers with a guaranteed market so that they may better plan their production (Cone and Myhre, 2000). Members are to pay up-front for a full year's share of the harvest so that farmers have the capital to buy the initial inputs. Furthermore, CSA is a means of sharing risk. When harvests are small everyone receives less; when crops are particularly successful members receive more. Members are also often required to provide some labour to the farm or to the distribution of food baskets and newsletters. The cost of the year's share is supposed to include the real costs of farming and contribute to a decent standard of living for the producer. For these reasons CSA has been described as a "community-based organization of producers and consumers" (Cone and Myhre, 2000). The participant in my study, however, has had difficulty in interesting her members in providing labour. She, therefore, does all the work herself (even driving the baskets to people's front doors or common drop-off sites). She has also under-priced her baskets so that she is not adequately compensated for her labour, and makes little profit. She does not insist on collecting the full year's price at the beginning of the season.

ECOLOGICAL FARMING

       I interviewed a family who operates an ecological farm, the produce from which they sell primarily at a local farmer's market. In total they farm between 200 and 220 acres, some of which is rented land. They are committed to mixed farming. Although their market business generates the most revenue, they have dedicated a significant number of acres to grain, hay, and straw. They also keep a small number of cows and pigs that use the grain, hay, and straw. They produce both organically and conventionally. The majority of their own fields are certified organic, and on their rented lands they find it more economical to produce conventionally. At the farmer's market they sell a variety of vegetables and berries (organic and non-organic) as well as certified organic stone-ground grains that they grind on their farm. The family also sells frozen beef and pork through informal networks, and have sold some produce to local winery restaurants in the past. The father has worked for 25 years as a tool and die maker and the mother is currently attending university and hopes to work full-time in a few years. Although they would have liked to spend all their working hours on the farm, their farm has not been profitable enough for the family of five to exist without off-farm income.

       While this family has certified organic fields, they prefer to identify themselves as 'ecological' farmers. The Ecological Farmer's Association of Ontario (2003), with which they have been highly involved, understand ecological farmers as those who:

> …work with nature by using practices like green manures, composting, cover crops, crop rotation, avoiding monocultures, encouraging biodiversity, windbreaks, attracting beneficial insects, access to outdoors for all livestock and avoiding the use of antibiotics. [They] rely on [their] own on-farm resources and avoid outside purchases as much as possible by growing and saving [their] own seeds or using cover crops to suppress weeds. Many [ecological farmers] market [their] farm products directly to other consumers, therefore giving [them] daily

contact with and a chance to hear the concerns of the people who eat the food [they] produce.

This understanding is thus broader than conventional understandings of organic agriculture, which typically consist of lists of allowable substances. While ecological farmers may sometimes use substances not permitted by organic standards (for example, when a farmer is under threat of losing an entire crop), ecological farming includes a greater diversity of techniques and principles meant to foster healthy relationships with the environment and consumers.

COMMUNITY GARDENS

I also included a community gardening project in my sample. There was only one community gardening project that was functional at the time of my interviews (although a local community group has since initiated such a project, and other community gardens have existed in the region in the past). The community gardening project in my sample is a joint initiative between Community Care of St. Catharines and Thorold (which operates food banks and distributes clothing and other items to people living in poverty), Niagara Regional Housing (which provides affordable housing to those in need), the City of St. Catharines Recreation and Community Services (which helps with the preparations for and maintenance of the gardens), Regional Niagara Public Health Department (which is interested in health promotion and protection), and the local business community (from which businesses have donated tools, supplies and money). The gardening project is designed for low-income clients of Niagara Regional Housing and Community Care and is meant to provide these clients with affordable access to healthy food and a chance to participate in a cooperative and healthy activity.

I interviewed two actors involved in the community gardening project. The first is a social-worker employed at Niagara Regional Housing. She does much of the coordinating of the project. She is involved in planning events and keeping gardeners up-to-date through newsletters, phone-calls and other means, and securing funding and resources in the off-season. The second participant is an agriculturalist who volunteers with the community gardens. He spends at least one day per week on site sharing his gardening knowledge with the clients.

Community gardening (which is one form of urban agriculture) is happening all over the world and is a practice that allows urban populations to access fresh, healthy (often organic or pesticide-free) and culturally appropriate food. Community gardens have sometimes been used in development projects (which seems to be the case with the gardens in my sample). In these cases they are often located in core neighbourhoods where people living in poverty are encouraged to grow their own food. The production of food in urban areas reduces the distance from production to consumption and has often been used to beautify run-down or abandoned land, turning it into productive community-driven projects. The organisation of community gardens takes several forms; they can be run communally, or divided into 'private' or exclusive plots. The produce can be for the consumption of the growers only, for donation to food banks or other community initiatives, or for sale. Recent studies (see for example Baker and Huh, 2003) suggest the practice of community gardening may also be a means for reinforcing personal histories and identities in immigrant populations. It is also a means for maintaining and gaining knowledge about vernacular growing practices and heritage varieties.

A particularly visible form of alternative food projects in the Niagara Region is seasonal, local cuisine. Seasonal, local cuisine has developed primarily in winery restaurants. However, some non-winery restaurant examples do exist, one of which I included in this research. The chef from one such restaurant owns, operates and cooks at an establishment in a small town that serves primarily local business populations at lunch and an older sometimes retired crowd in the evening. He has just expanded his operation and hopes to attract more tourists. He uses many local products -- including vegetables, meats, and wines -- which he obtains primarily from farmers' markets and roadside stands. He also grows herbs and edible flowers on the premises. He has not engaged directly with local producers to grow on contract because he says his scale of operation is too small (although growing). He comes from Germany and has had training and experience in Switzerland, Germany, and Canada.

Another participant engaged in local seasonal cuisine is a chef and kitchen manager at one of Niagara's first winery restaurants. The restaurant has always cooked with local seasonal food and engages directly in contracts with about twenty local growers. This chef admits that he uses more non-local and non-seasonal food than the restaurant may have used in the past (he attributes this to consumer demand). He is, however, quite committed to fostering relationships with local growers and using Niagara produce, especially in the summer months. He was born and grew up in Southern Ontario and he did his culinary training in Ontario and in Europe.

I also interviewed the executive chef of a second quite prominent winery restaurant. He is from Ontario and spent a number of years in Europe learning about

local seasonal cuisine. He has also devoted much time and effort to fostering direct relationships with local growers who work on contacts for the restaurant.

These three chefs are part of a local organisation called Tastes of Niagara, whose mandate it is to market and develop Niagara cuisine and wine. Tastes of Niagara developed out of Vision Niagara, a committee that in 1994 conducted a study (funded by Jobs Ontario Community Action Program) to identify the potential for developing a distinctive Niagara cuisine from farm to restaurant table. The study identified the need for a forum to link chefs with local producers. This has taken the form of a website where chefs can learn about what is being grown locally, and growers can learn what produce is requested by local restaurants. My participants expressed concern that the organisation has not been particularly active in the last two years and has cancelled some of its yearly events. Typically the organisation puts on a summer and a winter showcase where chefs are invited to present their local seasonal culinary creations.

The chefs I interviewed were also aware of and active in the slow food movement. A local chapter holds events where chefs showcase their cuisine and where growers have the chance to taste the food and talk to chefs. The slow food movement originated in Italy, in 1986, and is a reaction to the spread of (American-style) fast-food (Miele and Murdoch 2002: 317). The movement -- put into motion by food writers and chefs -- concentrates on promoting regional cuisine and on protecting local food production systems. The philosophy of the movement, as explained by Mara Miele and Jonathan Murdoch (2002: 318) is that:

> ...typical products and regional cuisines are important features of cultural distinctiveness. They need to be cultivated and protected, not for nostalgic reasons or because they are the latest fashion in high-class restaurants, but because they represent a rich cultural 'heritage'.

These local, seasonal cuisine projects are alternative in the sense that they pay particular attention to locality and foster direct relationships with growers. They bring attention to the local farmers by printing the farm/farmer's name on menus and highlight the seasonality of food. The movement has spread across Europe and has planted roots in North America and other continents. There are now more than 80,000 Slow Food members worldwide belonging to approximately forty Slow Food Convivia (Miele and Murdoch, 2002: 318).

GOOD FOOD BOX AND VALUE-ADDED BUSINESS

With a less obvious connection to food, another participant in this study is the executive director of a non-profit housing resource group that has initiated several community economic development projects. While the main and initial focus of the organisation was on developing and managing cooperative housing, it also ran a good food box programme for a few years. Recently, the director and her colleagues have established a private business for which the organisation is the primary shareholder. The business helps local women produce and market their value-added jams and sauces and, in its commercial kitchen, it also produces batches of products for other businesses. Part of the business mandate is to use local produce whenever possible. The organisation has also established a charitable agency that provides training to women.

The good food box scheme and the value-added business both fit my criteria for alternative food projects. Value-added businesses rarely figure in the literature on alternative food projects. However, I have included this one in my sample since it uses primarily local produce and fosters direct relationships with local farmers. Good food

box programmes are local distribution schemes that provide seasonal produce at affordable prices. Such programmes often solicit the participation of low income families (as was the case with this one) but are used by both wealthy and poorer consumers. Food boxes are prepaid at the beginning of the month and distributed near the end of the month when families typically have less disposable income. Often such schemes attempt to provide organic or pesticide-free produce, but this organisation was largely unsuccessful with their organic box. While the organisation tried to buy directly from local farmers, they often had problems with farmer cooperation. In particular, organic farmers could not meet the specified pick-up times since their produce was not always ready or ripe at these times. As a result, much of their produce was not pesticide-free and most was not bought directly from farmers. However, through both projects, the organisation has been particularly successful at creating employment for people who otherwise have had difficulties finding work.

WINERY THAT GROWS ORGANICALLY

After completing one set of interviews with the people and projects described above, I decided to add two more respondents to my sample. First I added a winemaker, from a winery that grows organically. In 2002, the winery began to grow grapes organically in one of its main vineyards and added two more vineyards in 2003. In total they now grow sixty acres organically, and will become certified in a couple years. Not only does the winery grow organically in these vineyards but its employees have also moved toward using compost tea, rather sulphur (which is an allowed substance under organic standards). They are also researching biodynamic methods of production, which

they hope to incorporate in the future. They have integrated other energy saving and environmentally sound practices, including a small parking lot and wine-tasting room, and gravity enhanced operations that allow for wine making without pumping. The winery has become fairly successful in the few years (less than ten) that it has been producing wine, and the winemaker has become fairly well-known. The winemaker is insistent that she does not produce 'commodity' wines. Rather, she understands her products as 'quality' wines that require more attention to *terroir* and more expertise in the wine-making process. Her customers tend to be highly educated wine enthusiasts who live in the Toronto region. The wines are priced at around fifteen dollars per bottle or more.

PESTICED-FREE FARMING

My last participant is a pesticide-free farmer who was added to gain insight into the relationship between chefs and their growers. She has been farming since 1980 and has always only used pesticides in emergency situations. In previous years she has grown produce for local winery restaurants under loose, verbal contracts. She used to supply restaurants with a variety of heirloom vegetables as well as chicken and duck eggs. In 2003, she did not sell her produce. At the time I interviewed her (in the summer of 2003) she had found two other sources of income generation and was devoting most of her time to these two. She had recently started a sewing company that was becoming more successful, and was also working part-time in the retail industry. She anticipated getting back into gardening in the next few years with the help of her growing children.

3.2 The Economic and Agricultural Context of Niagara

The Niagara Region, which covers 1,896 square kilometres, is composed of twelve local municipalities including four cities (The Regional Municipality of Niagara, 2003a). It is commonly described as a rural region, although it has a long history in both agricultural (particularly associated with tender fruits and grapes) and industrial sectors (from hydro-generation to automobile manufacturing and assembly). The purpose of this short section is to provide the broad economic and more specific agricultural context within which Niagara alternative food projects operate. For this section I have relied primarily on regional government documents and reports (or those of their partners and subsidiaries) to understand Niagara's agricultural and economic context.

A number of physical and built landscape features have made the Niagara Peninsula a very favourable location for agriculture. The combination of the Niagara escarpment (which offers protection from colder airflows from the West) and Lake Ontario (which moderates incoming flows from the North) produces a microclimate in which temperatures are typically several degrees warmer than the rest of the province (Stewart, 1997: 20). Parts of the Niagara peninsula also boast soils of well-drained sandy loam, which are ideal for vineyards and tender fruit. The Queen Elizabeth Way, which runs right through the best agricultural lands, provides easy access to transportation for growers; however, the highway is also associated with significant negative environmental impacts. The St. Lawrence Seaway is also easily accessed in the Niagara peninsula via Lake Ontario and the Welland Canal, although shipping is more strongly associated with the transportation of manufactured products and inputs. Lastly,

Niagara's proximity to the Canada-United States border means that it is well-positioned to tap into mass American markets (although reports show that free trade with the United States has not significantly and/or evenly benefited Niagara farmers)[9].

Since Niagara is one of the few regions in Canada with the appropriate climate and soil conditions for growing tender fruit and grapes, these crops quickly came to characterise the agricultural sector and Niagara became the 'fruitbasket' of Ontario. Indeed, Niagara still produces over eighty percent of the peaches and grapes in Ontario (Niagara Economic & Tourism Corporation, 2003a). Until the late 1980's, the agricultural sector was an integral part of Niagara's broader growth. For example, between 1970 and 1985 the value of farm output rose 57% (Niagara Region Development Corporation, 1994). During this period, livestock (including poultry) represented about one half of all agricultural production -- while fruit, flowers and vegetables accounted for the other half.

Recession hit the Niagara economy in the late 1980s and 1990s and virtually all sectors of the farm economy declined (with the exception of flowers/greenhouses). Farming as a source of paid employment fell from 30,000 full-time jobs in 1971 to 4,000 in 1991 (Bramble et.al, 1996). The economic decline was largely due to the anticipated and real negative effects of trade liberalisation and thus competition from the United States (Niagara Region Development Corporation, 1994). It was, however, not only a period of decline for agriculture. Rather, the recession hit all other sectors of the economy. The manufacturing (specifically auto parts) sector was drastically affected

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[9] Especially in relation to the wine industry, free trade has meant that foreign wines sell for the same or lower prices than those that are domestically produced, which negatively impacts demand and the price received by farmers [see for example Stewart (1997), Gayler (2003)]. The National Farmer's Union (2002) points out that the increase in agri-food exports since the initiation of NAFTA has not resulted in higher net farm incomes.

with an 11% decline in employment from 1990 to 1993, while employment in manufacturing in the rest of the province decreased by only 2% (Bank of Montreal, 2000: 7).

By the late 1990's Niagara was experiencing an economic recovery with total employment increasing by 6% between 1995 and 1999 (Bank of Montreal, 2000: 7). However, the economic crisis of the early nineties drastically altered the structure of the economy. With respect to agricultural production, land use and revenues are changing in the Niagara Region. Fruit production still dominates the Niagara landscape, with 916 farms covering 23,000 hectares of land (Niagara Economic & Tourism Corporation, 2003a). However, greenhouses and agri-food processing industries (which include wineries) generate the most revenue in Niagara's agricultural economy. So, while reports boast that the agricultural sector is growing [for example the Niagara Economic & Tourism Corporation (2003b) charts 117.7% growth in Niagara agriculture from 1989-1999] other sources suggest that this growth is particularly tied to greenhouses. Poultry, egg production and fruit crops (which are among Niagara's highest revenue generators) have held their own or seen very modest increases since 1986 (The Regional Municipality of Niagara, 2003b: 9.6). The Regional Municipality of Niagara (2003b: 4.35) also reports that gross farm receipts in the grape sector have been growing since 1997, and that wineries now contribute significantly to the rural economy. Thus, the agricultural growth that the Niagara Region is experiencing is particularly associated with greenhouses and agri-tourism.

The broader shift toward employment in the service sector in Niagara parallels trends in other highly industrialised economies. However, unlike other highly

industrialised economies, Niagara has had limited success with 'high-tech' and other 'knowledge' industries. Furthermore, the Niagara region has experienced this shift more rapidly than other regions in Canada. Between 1989 and 1999 employment in the Niagara manufacturing sector decreased by 14.7% while Ontario experienced a slight (0.6%) increase and Canada as a whole saw 4.3% growth (Regional Municipality of Niagara 2003: 9.7). The 2001 Canadian census indicates that there are far more Niagara residents employed in "sales and service occupations" (this excludes health and education occupations!) than any other single category. In fact, sales and service occupations account for 58,250 out of a total labour force of 207,555 in Niagara (Statistics Canada, 2001).

Niagara has received much institutional support for agri-tourism and this seems to nicely complement the shift toward service sector employment outlined above. This shift toward the tourist economy has been supported by institutions such as Human Resources Development Canada, Niagara Economic and Tourism Corporation, Regional Municipality of Niagara, Wines of Ontario (a joint provincial/federal initiative) and the Bank of Montreal. Praise, investment and incentives have been offered by these groups despite the fact that tourism is highly seasonal, offers few full-time permanent jobs, is notorious for low employment income, is not particularly enjoyed or used by local inhabitants, and has negative impacts on the environment. Nevertheless, reports suggest that "tourism has emerged as the driving force of Niagara's economic renaissance and is a significant contributor to an industry sector that generates over $57 Billion to the Canadian economy" (Niagara Economic & Tourism Corporation, 2003b). Agri-tourism seems to be the 'made in Niagara' strategy adopted by all relevant levels of government.

In the agricultural sector the trend has been away from food production such as livestock and cash crops toward a strategy of agi-food and agri-tourism which includes greenhouse (flower) production and retail, wine production (and associated winery restaurants), fruit stands and many more. Interestingly, production of commodities such as poultry, which generates the second highest farm receipts (with only greenhouse production exceeding it), is downplayed in the reports released by local developers and planners (Regional Municipality of Niagara, 2003b). This indicates that a discourse of agri-tourism has been adopted and given prominence in order to aid, or perhaps drive, the material shift toward agri-tourism.

Despite the recent support for agri-tourism, there are conflicting discourses of tourism associated with the Niagara Region. Niagara Falls in particular, has long been the site of an 'older' model of tourism. This more traditional form of tourism relies on mass markets and standardised experiences, including fast food strips, Casinos, and the Clifton Hill amusement area, which features Las Vegas-like entertainment such as wax museums, haunted houses, and theme restaurants. In the case of the Niagara Falls, nature is constructed as a larger-than-life attraction. Marineland, the Butterfly Conservatory and other examples construct nature as objects of fascination that one visits at specific establishments within the urban milieu.

The discourse of agri-tourism relies on quite different attractions and constructions of nature. In this newer model, the 'rural' and the 'regional' are played up, and the tourist is meant to consume an experience that is unique to Niagara. The intention is to associate agri-tourism with a cultural experience by focusing on the agricultural heritage of the Region and its distinctive character. Agri-tourism emphasises

a much more hands-on experience where tourists are encouraged to touch (for example through pick-your-own operations, or expeditions that invite the tourist to pick ice-wine grapes in the middle of the night) and taste (for example by tasting wine and eating local, seasonal cuisine). These tourist operations are often understood by tourists as providing more authentic experiences with nature since they are associated with rural landscapes and a sphere which is more separate from humans. The agri-tourist experience is also being marketed as a 'high-end' experience and is frequented by more elite visitors.

While these two tourist discourses are quite contradictory, development planners have been attempting to integrate the two models. The opening of Casino Niagara in 1996 and the opening of a second casino in the spring of 2004 have and are expected to attract more tourists to the area. Development planners would like to see the agricultural sector benefit from this influx and contribute to the total experience of tourists. There is a focus on attracting wealthier tourists that enjoy 'good' wine and frequent upscale establishments. Not only does agri-tourism benefit those operating the farms/wineries, but the discourse can also be used to raise the profile of the region as a whole.

3.3 Agri-tourism and Development: Discourses of Business, Development and Tourism

The theme of agri-tourism and development was one of the first to emerge as I began to pore over my first round of interview transcripts, and I knew immediately that it would be one of my central categories of analysis. While Niagara Falls and Niagara-On-The-Lake are long-established tourist landscapes, the tourism network is extending its reach beyond these centres and attractions to enrol a variety of rural Niagara actors and resources. In this section I argue that Niagara agriculture has been significantly affected by the broader economic shift toward service industries and the active promotion of and support for tourism. I propose two important conceptualisations. First, I discuss agri-tourism as a *network* in-the-making, comprised of situated actors such as business people and bureaucrats from various levels of government. These actors have extended the network's reach (and thus durability) by enrolling rural landscapes and people. Second, I argue that a driving force behind the success of this network is a mutually reinforcing discourse of business-development-tourism. In particular, I discuss the ways in which this triad of discourse, which circulates readily through this network, has been integral to the process of enrolment of alternative food projects. While some of the projects in my sample have been successfully enrolled into this network, discourses of resistance to agri-tourism are found within the practices and communications of these and other food actors (and these and other discourses of resistance are the topic of the next section).

Discourses of business, development, and tourism often appear together in policies, reports and websites that address Niagara's economy. In fact, the three

discourses are used in ways that reinforce each other's claims and serve to naturalise a particular strategy of economic development that is characteristic of neo-liberal economies. The taken-for-granted goal is to increase economic growth or to achieve economic development [especially where (often rural) regions are thought to be lacking development]. According to such discourses, this is best accomplished through 'minimal' state involvement and the free entry of private, competitive businesses. Interestingly, this language underemphasises the large role that the state does play in attracting businesses, providing infrastructure, and fostering favourable business environments, all of which help private businesses remain profitable. Private business is understood as providing the needed employment and as being efficient in its allocation of resources. The focus on tourism and the service industry is believed to be a natural development choice since the movement toward tertiary economies is consistent with the development trajectories of industrialised nations.

The assumptions outlined above, and their mutual reinforcement, are easily gleaned from the literature used in the last section to outline the context of the Niagara economy. For example, a 1996 report funded by Human Resources Development Canada, Niagara Economic and Tourism Corporation, and the Regional Municipality of Niagara outlines the "underlying values in our visions for a better Niagara" which include, among others:

> ...experience[ing] progress through the pursuit of excellence and the encouragement to invest...[and] achiev[ing] a renewed sense of vitality through the development and use of cutting-edge innovations, the fostering of an entrepreneurial spirit and the inspiration of dynamic leadership" (15).

Under the heading "Vision for governance" the same report encourages "appropriate governance where needed and nowhere else" (12).

A second example of the close link between the discourses of business, development and tourism can be gleaned from the partnership between the Niagara Tourism and Development Corporation and the Niagara Regional Municipality. The only paragraph under the heading "economic development" in the business section of the Niagara Regional Municipality website directs the reader to consult the Niagara Tourism and Development Corporation. This agency of the Regional Government says of itself:

> The Niagara Economic and Tourism Corporation is a non-profit corporation with a mandate to carry out activities to advance the economic prosperity of the Niagara community. The Corporation provides effective, innovative services to promote investment and visitation and provides business support services to attract, maintain, and increase jobs in Niagara (Niagara Economic and Development Corporation 2003c).

In the literature released by the Regional Municipality of Niagara, the Niagara Tourism and Development Corporation, the Bank of Montreal and Human Resources Development Canada greenhouse production and agri-tourism are touted as successful and promising methods of rural agricultural development. Indeed, significant levels of funding and support have been distributed in order to establish Niagara as a high-end agri-tourist experience. For example, the Wine Council of Ontario (a non-profit trade association that promotes and coordinates actors in the Ontario wine industry) was made possible through a joint $100 million federal-provincial initiative (Telfer, 2001). The Niagara Economic and Tourism Corporation (a non-profit corporation and agency of the Niagara regional government) has as its mandate the "provi[sion of] effective, innovative services to promote investment and visitation and [the] provi[sion of] business support services to attract, maintain, and increase jobs in Niagara (Niagara Economic & Tourism Corporation, 2003c).

Despite the fact that agri-tourism is a powerful influence in the Niagara Region, it is important to think of it as a network (in-the-making) rather than as a fixed and immutable force. By following the actors who build the network, and attending to the ways in which they are locally situated, it becomes clear that the success of agri-tourism in Niagara is not at all pre-given. Rather, this network is a dominant force in Niagara because its constituent actors' successfully align and enrol actors and intermediaries. I use the experiences of alternative food actors in Niagara to explain the ways in which their food projects have become enrolled in the agri-tourist network and to understand which actors they see as performing authorship in this network.

As a number of my participants observed, wine actors have been particularly successful at aligning various other actors (such as bureaucrats and growers) with their interests through their involvement in organisations such as the Wine Council of Ontario and the Vintner's Quality Alliance (VQA). Agri-tourism in Niagara is highly associated with wine tourism to the extent that wineries (and winery discourse) have become nearly the only means through which food projects and farms may enrol in the agri-tourist network. Indeed, the wine-maker in my study explains agri-tourism in Niagara as emerging out of the interests and actions of wineries and wine-makers. For this participant, the process of establishing Niagara as an agri-tourist destination is very much in-the-making and contingent on the innovation and enthusiasm of wine entrepreneurs, the conceding of subsidies and grants from provincial and federal governments, the complicity of grape farmers, and the successful education of consumers:

> ...their [Ziraldo and Kaiser's] license sort of marked the beginning of the new winery age...it was small and they were really the pioneers and then in the uh...probably mid to late eighties the discussions about VQA started, and that also was initiated by Donald Ziraldo and a core group of wineries and wine

makers…[and then] the free trade agreement came in. Gee this is gonna put our, our producers at a disadvantage, lets throw some money at the industry to restructure it. So there was a *grape rip-out programme to pull, to pay growers to pull out undesirable grape varieties*…And then there was also money to launch the VQA and to promote the VQA, *you know to provide people with an understanding and an education of what an appellation system was about* and a whole sort of marketing campaign behind it…So by promoting the wines of origin it also became visit the wineries, visit the region, visit wine country, and that's where *we're still on a continuum of that*, and currently there's provincial money that's been granted to the industry to promote the tourism aspect of wine country. [emphasis added]

The three chefs that participated in this research also clearly saw wineries as central to agri-tourism. They were concerned that culinary tourism in Niagara is only successful by virtue of its association with wine and wineries. Thus good venues for promoting local seasonal food, as this chef points out, are places like the Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO):

> …this culinary tourism as they call it, it's all about wine. ALL about wine because the LCBO, it's an incredible marketing machine and they're putting all that money behind wine. And the wineries are pumping, I mean the profit on wine is a hell of a lot larger than the profit on food so they have more to spend. And so when you think of culinary tourism in Niagara the first thing you think of is wine, and food has always sort of taken a back seat to that, and it's very unfortunate. So we have a hard time promoting it and it's generally up to the chefs…for us to go out to cooking classes and do demos at the LCBO.

The fact that agri-tourism is so closely associated with wine is of great significance because of the cultural meaning of wine in North America and elsewhere. Here, Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) insights on the class-based and class-constructing characteristics of consumption are especially pertinent. In this sense, wine can be understood as a cultural good for which the bourgeois have a particular taste. The consumption of wine (above all 'good' wine) can be used as a strategy to distinguish oneself from 'ordinary' or lower class folk; it lends prestige and reinforces ones social position. For instance, there is a certain type of knowledge, a specific discourse, and a set of sensitivities that one ought to

develop in order to converse about wine. Thus, the agri-tourist focus on wine should be perceived as a strategy aimed at attracting the bourgeois class.

Easily identifiable in all my participants' communications is the business-development-tourism discourse that circulates through the agri-tourist network. As gleaned from participants' responses and from tourism-promoting websites, discourses of tourism are nearly always accompanied by those of development and business. For this reason I propose that the discourse that circulates through the Niagara agri-tourist network be thought of as a triad of mutually reinforcing and constituting discourses. The ways in which these discourses come together and mutually constitute each other was most obvious in my interviews with the director of a non-profit organisation. The director tells the story of her organisation from the development and management of co-operative housing, through the distribution of a good food box, to the establishment of both a training programme for women entering the service industry and a for-profit value-added business. This gradual evolution can be conceptualised as the process of enrolment into the agri-tourist network. In this passage she identifies Robin Murray[10] as part of the agri-tourist network and as the actor who initiated the enrolment and interest of her organisation into the network. Here, it is obvious that 'the government' does not act, nor is it a stable entity. Rather, action is relational; individuals and policies change over time and space:

> At one of those meetings was a gentleman by the name of Robin Murray, who the government at that point had hired, this was before the change in government. They had hired him to help the province, under an NDP government, do COMMUNITY economic development, not the typical big time economic

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[10] Robin Murray (author of *Creating Wealth from Waste* and researcher at the Centre for the Study of Global Governance at the London School of Economics) was hired by the (1990-95) New Democratic Party provincial government to help initiate community-based economic development in the food and cultural sectors.

development that you'd get in the city but starting with the grass-roots and doing things…Give them [community groups] a LITTLE bit of money, maybe a couple thousand, and see if they could come up with projects, but then the other idea was then, do it by sectors, which hadn't been done before. So he took the approach that you take o.k. Niagara, what's the biggest growth industry here? It's the food sector, so he said ok, Niagara, let's focus on the food and tourism sectors because that's the growing industry…And so what we were to do was to think of tiny little projects and I think we were each given a couple thousand just to brainstorm, to go, anything you could do to think of what could you do with your piece, so in our case it was how to link farmers to consumers.

This account is particularly illustrative of the triad of discourse that circulates through the agri-tourist network. In this case, the discourse of community economic development is completely linked to the development of (small) business and the industry of tourism. They are mutually constitutive to the extent that the generation of wealth (in economic development discourse) is undertaken through entrepreneurship and investment, and this is most successfully accomplished in booming industries (in this case tourism). Further, since Niagara has been constructed as a stagnating region, it is thus in 'need' of development to be accomplished through business and investment.

The story of this organisation in many ways exemplifies the process of enrolment into the agri-tourist network. The director says the organisation is now seen as a "legitimate player on the wine route," indicating that it is firmly embedded in the network. The small business hosts tours of its operation and sells jams and spreads (made with local produce) to a mostly tourist market. On the charity side, the organisation has developed a programme that schools women living on social assistance in service employment, thus enlisting more actors into the network. Despite this seemingly total integration with the agri-tourist network, the next excerpt from the director's interview shows that integration is far from total or natural; it is indeed precarious and consciously practiced every day:

> We had to re-learn and start thinking as a business not a non-profit, and that transition was very hard, and that's SO hard for any non-profit to start a for-profit business, 'cause you make decisions based on the good of the WOMEN involved not necessarily what's good for the business.

In order for the organisation to become so highly integrated into the agri-tourist network, a significant shift in attitude had to take place. Initially the staff and members of the non-profit saw themselves as having interests and tastes that opposed those of tourists and 'rich' consumers. As the director says:

> ...the consumers are COMPLETELY different. It's tourists that we see once. It's locals that are more high-end consumers. Yeah, we've become a legitimate player in a sector that would have previously seen us as s beer and pizza crowd. So we have gained their trust and their respect and we respect them now. It was two way, we didn't trust each other. So we had to build that, we had to let go of our biases too, I mean we didn't know rich people, we didn't particularly like them, we had a whole bias against them.

While these biases may have been successfully overcome, it is important to understand the organisation's enrolment into the agri-tourist network as a *process* that is undertaken over time. Trust had to be *built*, and biases had to be *let go*. Furthermore, trust is a quality that has to be actively maintained. The success of the organisation's engagement in the network is thus something that is always in-the-making, even if the most challenging work has already been accomplished.

Not surprisingly, the links between business, development and tourism were made very explicit during interviews with the three chefs in my sample. Indeed, these chefs are firmly located at the juncture of the three discourses. They are businesspeople who serve a primarily tourist market and see themselves as being directly involved in both the economic and cultural development of Niagara. While the chefs are very cognisant of the agricultural heritage of the area, the countryside is portrayed as having gained sophistication, culture and wealth from the development of the wine industry.

...and I think you have to look at who was here, and who's come here. So, who was here? More fundamentally the farmers, because THAT'S basically what this area was...you know this land is great for growing wheat, it's great for raising cattle, it's great for growing peaches, it's great for growing raspberries, um, maybe even grapes to some degree... So all of a sudden now, you have hotels being built, and a theatre being built, and now a winery being built, and soon to that would be obviously a RESTAURANT, and one thing leads to another...I mean think of Mr. Weiss who would have come here in the late seventies and said I think this land [has] got some potential. You know his historical reference, Germany, with the altitude and wind movement and water and cold, and to sort of have this vision -- to say let's put some vines in here, let's see what happens. And for Howard to take this property and produce what it's doing today, to bring in TALENT i.e. a wine-maker from B.C. and say look at this terroir, these are grape varieties, this is what we potentially can do, what do you think? And do it. I mean look at myself I've come from Europe to cook what at that time was a five table restaurant into what is now, you know, a world renowned restaurant.

This chef understands himself and the agri-tourist industry as having lifted the area out of agricultural mediocrity into 'world class' distinction. Here again, Bourdieu's (1984) insights are helpful. It is clear that there are certain tastes, foods, and presentations of food that are associated with and perpetuated by upper classes.

The business-development-tourism discourse which circulates through the agri-tourist network is a fundamental tool for the enrolment of new actors and thus, the extension of the network. It is certainly a discourse that is trusted and participated in by government agencies. Indeed, as is suggested in the winemaker's statement above, businesses (especially wineries) that are able to successfully align themselves with and mobilise the triad have been able to secure grants and incentives from all levels of government, thus extending their personal networks. Furthermore, the business-development-tourism discourse has been used to entice growers into the agri-tourist network. The triad of discourse assures growers that they are, or will become, part of a thriving, regionally integrated industry with consumers who are willing to pay a premium for unusual varieties or organically grown produce. The process of translation for these

growers involves a shifting of emphasis away from the production of a few crops in large amounts to the production of a large variety of chemical-free crops (often heirloom varieties) in small amounts.

The only project which challenges my conceptualisation of the mutually reinforcing triad of discourse is the community gardens. This project is clearly a development project, but its link to discourses of business and tourism is a bit less obvious; indeed it is not really part of the agri-tourist network. Nevertheless, the programme's endeavours reflect a neo-liberal discourse, in which individuals are not perceived as victims of structural and economic inequalities. Rather, this discourse conceptualises people living in poverty as lacking the skills to make the proper rational decisions that would lead them to employment and thus, away from poverty. This neo-liberal attitude is gleaned from the coordinator's description of the goals of her organisation's garden project:

> ..it's a little bit of a community involvement and learning that you can do something like this for yourself. And if they can realise they can work for themselves they're more likely to actually do for themselves instead of looking for the hand out. *It's a hand UP, instead of a hand out*[11]...I'm a big person for not creating dependency, so with something like this they're learning to be dependent on their own skills...because we can't do it for them. [Emphasis added]

Participants in these community gardens are gaining the type of knowledge and skills that are required for them to participate in the business world. They are trained through the project to feel good about doing things for themselves rather than to solicit or rely on the help of others. Participants ought to understand that a lack or abundance of harvested

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[11] The slogan "hand up instead of a hand out" comes directly from Mike Harris' campaign platform in which he promised a "common-sense revolution". Mike Harris was the leader of the Ontario Progressive Conservatives and came to provincial power in 1995. He is notorious for implementing a number of neo-liberal policies including cutting social spending in order to "run the province like a business". His cuts to and restructuring of welfare programmes were particularly vicious towards the poor.

food correlates directly with the effort they exert. They are also taught about private property and valuation:

> ...and also it [their own plot] has to have value, so if they think that if they don't take care of their plot you're going to give it away, or they'll no longer be welcome to participate, or somebody else could use it, they're more likely to continue on with it. So it's giving you the value and planning it early on [that] are the best two things that we [as organisers] can do.[12]

It is not only those involved directly and indirectly in the agri-tourist network who are impacted by the channelling of resources and support toward culinary and wine tourism. Indeed, the following comment from the CSA farmer is particularly significant as it shows that the agri-tourist network extends even into those forums specifically established to support alternative forms of production (in this case the Canadian Organic Growers).

> We had a talk, I think it was in January, and a fellow...I think [he was from] Ontario's first certified organic winery, it was the busiest, the most people we've EVER had at the [Canadian Organic Growers'] meetings...Yeah, we had a talk on organic vegetables, we didn't have a great show [of people]. That's not, that's not where the money's made, I know that's not where the money's made for sure.

The enrolment of these alternative spaces and actors helps to extend the reach of the agri-tourist network, and contributes to its stability and success over time. Such clubs and forums are excellent spaces through which to secure farmer's participation in agri-tourist networks as they are often already perceived by farmers as spaces with a history of trust and sharing. This CSA farmer finds it bothersome that representatives from the wine industry have been able to use Canadian Organic Grower meetings to recruit alternative farmers into their networks. She feels that the push for grapes and wine emerges less

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[12] My critical reading of the intentions of this project could be contested by those who argue for the need to replace programmes that encourage dependency and surveillance with those that promote self-help. The challenge is to build such self-help programmes without falling into the neo-liberal trap (as does this project) which blames the poor for their position in the social hierarchy and characterises them, for example, as 'criminal' or 'lazy'.

from the interests of alternative farmers involved in the association and more from 'outside' forces.

The purpose of this section has been to conceptually establish agri-tourism in Niagara as a network. In this section I have discussed bureaucrats at all levels of government, tourism-promoting organisations, business people/chefs, grower organisations and growers as being significant players in agri-tourist networks. I have clearly left out a number of actors and intermediaries (especially notable by their absence are non-human actors) as this section was not meant to trace all the actors, but rather to use the experiences of my participants. For a discussion of the non-human actors in alternative food project networks see section 3.5 where I work towards an understanding of the agency of nature in networks. Consumers are also a group of actors that I have not included in my analysis (or my sample) but who are very important to their networks.

I have suggested in this section that the triad of discourse, business-development-tourism, which circulates through the Niagara agri-tourist network, has been important in the process of enrolment of new/alternative actors and in the continued alignment of 'older' or current sources of support such as bureaucrats and investors. The degree to which the projects in my sample have become enrolled in the network differs, but those projects that are most firmly established within the network are also those that use the triad of discourse most freely. The triad is particularly useful in securing resources from government agencies as the same discourses are prevalent in government publications. The enrolment of new actors/spaces and the continued alignment of current actors/spaces through the circulation of the triad of discourse allow the extension and continued success of the network.

It is important to think of agri-tourism in Niagara as a network (where each actor or project is itself also a network) *in-the-making*, rather than as a complete, coherent and powerful industry. The reason for insisting on its incomplete and precarious status (even while recognising that relations of power between the agri-tourist and other agricultural networks favour the former) is to establish space for possibilities of resistance, subversion, reconfiguration, or dismantling of the network. In part because of its prominent position in Niagara agriculture, food actors have sought out alternative practices and voiced their frustrations with the agri-tourist network. These discourses of resistance are the subject of the next section.

3.4 Discourses/Practices of Resistance

One might expect to find discourses of resistance among alternative food actors since they are practicing methods of production, consumption and distribution that to some degree circumvent conventional systems of food production. Discourses of resistance do appear in each interview I conducted, however, few actors seem to conceptualise the sum of their practices as an overt strategy of resistance against corporate/industrial agriculture (although a few actors come closer to this). There seem to be more coherent discourses of resistance against the agri-tourist network (specifically against the prominence of wine) than against conventional systems of production more generally. This section demonstrates that despite, or perhaps because of, the prominence of the agri-tourist network in Niagara and the triad of discourse that circulates through it, significant discourses of resistance are present among alternative actors. These discourses provide evidence of the incomplete penetration of agri-tourism and 'conventional' food systems and suggest that dominant practices are indeed quite vulnerable.

The study of resistance seems recently to have received much attention with the post-structuralist challenge to more traditional conceptualisations of both power and resistance. Post-structuralists are sometimes accused of being somewhat "promiscuous" with the term resistance, applying it to everyday activities that others view as not being intentional enough to be considered acts of resistance (Mittleman with Chin, 2000: 165). Influenced by Michel Foucault, many post-structuralists counter that domination and resistance are not pure and opposite categories of reality. In fact, it may be more accurate

to think of these concepts as forming a continuum, of which the extreme poles are never realised (Sharp et al., 2000: 21). Joanne Sharp et al., (2000) suggest that all acts of resistance are also characterised by some form of domination and vice versa. Thus, where there exists everyday exploitation and domination, there is also likely to exist some level of resistance.

Actor-network theory incorporates many of these broad insights from post-structuralist conceptualisations of power and resistance. Following Foucault (1984), power is understood as productive and relational. First, this means that power is something that enables action. Even where it seems to restrict or deny certain possibilities it opens up others. Second, it is the relations that are *a priori*, not the actors. Thus actors become powerful through their relations, they do not hold power first and then exert it. In ANT, relations are understood to be organised into networks. Accordingly, power is a productive effect of network relations. Power is expressed in the formation and transformation of networks, which involves the enrolment of new actors into the network and the alignment of their interests with those of the network.

Actor-network theorists use the phrase 'sociology of translation' to talk about the relational exercise of power and resistance in networks. The process of translation refers to the continual displacements, transformations and negotiations that are inherent in the building of networks (Callon 1986 in Herbert-Cheshire 2003: 460). There are four commonly recognised 'moments' of translation: problematisation, interessement, enrolment and mobilisation (Davies, 2002: 196). In the initial phase, actors define a problem. In the second moment (interessement), actors begin to solicit alliances and networks begin to take shape. This is a stage in which there are many opportunities for

resistance (Davies 2002: 196). The actors being solicited may enter into negotiations with the initial actors, they may resist the initial course of action, or they may propose alternate directions.

The third phase involves the consolidation of networks. Actors become enrolled in the network, and the organisation and function of the network become solidified. This stage is also characterised by relations of resistance (Davies, 2002: 196). Actors may not comply with the intentions of the initial actors and the operations of the network may become solidified in ways that these initial actors had not anticipated, thus subverting the initial goals. The final stage entails the mobilisation of the network; the actors are set into motion. This action may or may not reflect the intentions of the initial actors.

The theory of power and resistance put forth by ANT differs radically from more orthodox understandings where, for example, resistance is described as "declared organised opposition to institutionalised economic and military power" (Mittelman with Chin, 2000: 166); or following Polanyi, where resistance entails countermovements which are based on collective action, solidarity, and engaging in conflict with the dominant system (Mittelman with Chin, 2000: 170). In ANT, power is not understood as the domination of one actor over another. Rather, it is about the relations that allow one actor to bring other actors into his/her plan of action or network. Resistance is thus explained as the disruption of network building and consolidation. However, it is not only humans that have the capacity to resist in actor-network theorisations. Instead, "materials of all kinds (including human materials) are better pictured as offering a *gradient* of resistance" (Law, 1991b: 176) [emphasis in original]. Since all materials

have the capability to threaten the stability of networks, resistance is not theorised exclusively as an intentional act (although some resistances are clearly intentional).

I am using a more post-structuralist understanding of resistance which allows me to construct everyday practices and discourses as resistance, and which instructs me to suspect some level of resistance wherever power and domination are found. Since all relations in ANT are understood as organised into networks, the possibility for resistance exists everywhere. Many of the examples I bring to the fore in this section are discourses rather than practices of resistance. As I have shown in section 3.3, discourses are constitutive of networks; they help to ensure that networks are stabilised and are integral to the enrolment of new actors. Thus, if *practices* of resistance amount to the destabilisation of networks, then *discourses* of resistance similarly interrupt the smooth functioning of networks and open up spaces for further disruption.

The regional focus on agri-tourism in Niagara affects alternative food actors in multiple ways. As I have already suggested, alternative actors feel that resources, (especially incentives and subsidies coming from various levels of government) are unevenly distributed. This uneven distribution is mentioned by differently positioned actors. For example, chefs firmly located within the agri-tourist industry are disappointed that wine receives more promotion because of its regulated flow through state-run liquor control boards. They are also disappointed that for food there exists no equivalent to the state-supported Wine Council of Ontario, and explain that Foodland Ontario has not been as successful at promoting local seasonal restaurant cuisine. Indeed, Foodland's main goal is to have consumers buy local produce in grocery stores and farmer's markets,

rather than in restaurants. One chef was particularly forceful on this issue, although all the chefs interviewed expressed similar concerns:

> I'm having a bit of an issue right now with the majority of publicity and support and the focus of Ontario tourism right now seems to be wine. And I don't feel enough of it is on the food element. 'Cause I mean there's a WINE Council of Ontario, but there's no food council of Ontario, there's a wine council of Niagara, there's you know a Vintner's Quality Alliance for Niagara but there's nothing like that for food, so it seems to be a little biased, and a little skewed, yeah it's somewhat upsetting.

Since wine is so central to the discourse of agri-tourism, chefs are in a real position to destabilise the agri-tourist network. Although they do not want to see its total dismantling, they would like to assert their own agendas. They have begun to do this by circulating an alternate discourse through food critics and researchers like me. However, their close institutional ties with wine (many such local seasonal restaurants are part of wineries, and have become successful through their association with winery tourism) require more anonymous discourses of resistance intended for only certain audiences.

The uneven distribution of state support is also highlighted by actors positioned at the margins (or indeed outside of the industry) of agri-tourism. The following insights are significant as they come from the ecological farming family, who devotes a portion of their produce to winery restaurants and thus (marginally) benefits from culinary tourism.

> See the push really is for Niagara to be grape, to be the wine country, so I mean, not only is it detrimental to other fruit crops, but certainly to other cash crops too. You know, the whole mentality is grow grains out West…the funding is there for wineries, and for grapes, and that is all part of tourism, it's hardly even farming any more, so I think that everything else gets overlooked.

These farmers practice mixed farming, and are convinced that it is more environmentally friendly than specialised production in just one or a few crops. Despite the fact that Niagara is particularly suited to grape growing, and the West to grain growing, they feel

that a variety of crops should be grown in Niagara. They have been active in disrupting the pro agri-tourist discourse that constructs the Niagara Region singularly as a grape and fruit growing landscape.

While this family of ecological farmers feels that resources have been channelled away from cash crops in the last decade, they do not put the entire blame on the agri-tourist economy. Rather, they subscribe to a much wider (partisan) politics that facilitates the understanding of agri-tourism as just one of the many detrimental policies of neo-liberal (or right-wing) governments:

> We had a right-wing [agricultural extension service] advisor for the longest time here…OMAFRA extension services were completely obliterated by the Ontario government, just a HORRIFIC decision. JUST HORRIFIC. He moved on of course to work in the private sector with Clark Agriservice here. So, he saw the writing on the wall that he was going to be without a job and so he went where he belonged in the first place, promoting all these [laughing] multinational crop inputs to people….So, no I don't think there was a whole lot of government support for alternate ideas. Now when the NDP won the election a few years ago, there was a radical shift to embrace possibilities, and it was exciting to see that they were thinking, again, like the Quebec model about you know, we can take care of both of these communities [referring to both the conventional and alternative communities]…But under the Tory government it has been BRUTAL, DESTRUCTIVE… And the GMO and everything, like they're really wanting to push that. Oh, they love that, this is modern, this is technology, EMBRACE THE FUTURE!

Of all my participants this couple seem to have the most consistently resistant discourses. Not only are they resistant to the state's retreat from rural extension services and its reallocation of support toward wineries and grapes, but they are also adamantly opposed to its promotion of genetically modified (GM) crops. They clearly understand GM crops as means to further decrease the security of farmers and are frustrated that the multinational corporations that promote them provide major funding for agricultural research. Interestingly, the family practices both conventional and organic agriculture

and the couple are happy, as they put it, "having their feet in both graves". So while they have a quite nuanced understanding of the interconnecting agendas of business, tourism, government, and multinational companies, too many barriers exist to practice only ecological agriculture. For example, a significant portion of their farmland is rented, which makes those fields simply too risky to certify organically. Furthermore, both of them spend a significant amount of time off the farm working and studying.

My participants also raised questions about the extent to which agri-tourism, as it has been pursued in Niagara, actually benefits farmers. The emphasis in Niagara on grapes and fruits, and an aesthetically pleasing landscape undermines farmer's ability to produce food for local populations. Certainly, such development initiatives that do not positively impact farmers are not sustainable. This is clearly expressed by this participant who volunteers in the community gardens:

> If you live in Toronto and you drive to Niagara once a year you don't want to see tractors and sprayers and farm equipment that is needed to make money with a farm, you don't want to see greenhouses, warehouses any of that stuff. What you want to see is quaint fields with grapes that kind of remind you of the corridor region just in front of your doorstep and you want some nice wineries to visit right?...What it, agri-tourism boils down to is more or less the ideal scenario for the winery...that you declare this here [the best agricultural lands in Niagara] as some sort of agricultural heritage site where you cannot grow anything other than tender fruit and grapes, ok?

Here the discourse is less resistant toward agri-tourism in general, rather it is associated with the specific emphasis on grapes, fruit and wineries. In this next description the same participant explains an agri-tourist operation that he thinks is worth supporting:

> They make an event out of that, people can come and they can see how apples are being harvested, how they're being processed, they can participate, they can bring their kids there. Their kids can see that milk comes out of a cow and that corn grows on a cob on a corn plant...That is agri-tourism, that actually benefits the farmer because the people see that farmers actually have to work very hard to make a living, and somehow pay those, those tractors off. In um, what has

happened here, they call it agri-tourism, but the wineries [have] precious little to do with local agriculture, especially not if 75 percent[13] of grapes are imported from other places, right?

Perhaps more accurately, many of the concerns voiced by this participant revolve around the difficult and unjust place of farmers in various types of food systems. Thus, his condemnation of both winery tourism and conventional systems of food production arise out of what he perceives as the exploitation of farmers. Furthermore, he is also critical of the ways in which farmers are treated in alternative systems. The following is an explanation of his resistance to the way in which both proponents of conventional and alternative (organic) agriculture establish farmers as those to be held responsible for environmentally unsustainable practices:

> …Society demands that the farmers, its easy to dump blame on farmers for absolutely everything that's happening, and then if you dissect, farmers don't have a loud voice, ok, because they are sort of nameless. It has a lot to do with perception. What would be the incentive for the farmer to farm with different practices, if those practices make him lose even more money? Ok? Are you going to go to Zehr's and pay twice the price for an apple that looks lousier [an organic apple] than the apple that you get for half price?…I mean it is self-interest of the farmer that he applies good management, what we call best management practices which are very well established. It's self-interest that we do that, because we would destroy the basis of our livelihood if we destroy the soil and the sustainability of that farm. And that's very easily done, if, but why do we have to defend ourselves for doing the things that we are doing [using herbicide and pesticide sparingly]?

As was hinted at in the quotations above, a number of my participants saw a role for a politics of consumption in resisting corporate agriculture and the inherent inequality among actors in such systems. Because people practice food production as a means of

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[13] Wines that are not approved by the Vintner's Quality Alliance (VQA) are not required to use produce and products from Niagara. I was unable to confirm the statistic given by the participant in the excerpt above, but certainly makers of non-VQA wines use imported grapes when they can secure them for a cheaper price. Another participant (the winemaker) suggested that even VQA wines may contain a high volume of imported grape juice and/or water. For example, if a wine company uses locally produced bottles and labels they may be able to satisfy the minimum standards of the VQA without using a high volume of Niagara grapes.

livelihood, they are in the practice of supplying markets. Thus, no matter how dedicated

they are to organic production, there must be a market in order to sustain such practices.

The participant that grows without pesticides, for example, suggests that an important

step in making pesticide-free agriculture possible is consumer resistance:

> The whole history of use of pesticides is in my estimation an advertising ploy for
> cultural perfection. Perhaps, like an apple, apples don't have to be a perfect shape
> and perfect colour free of absolutely every blemish and shiny and oiled and all
> those things, that's not, that's um, that's advertising. You don't have to have a
> perfect lawn that's like a piece of velvet. That's advertising, and that's where
> we've headed with everybody needing the biggest fattest, and most of these fruits
> are tasteless now anyways and I don't believe in that.

On the other hand, choosing organics does not necessarily imply consumer resistance. In

fact, especially in winery restaurants, it has been deliberately marketed as a symbol of

status and distinction. Chefs feel that organics may be just another food trend. It is

obvious in this quotation, from the wine-maker, that the association of organics with elite

consumerism (and thus higher priced consumer products) is desired by those operating

agri-tourist establishments:

> …Restaurants promoting organic food, or, not necessarily promoting but just
> serving it, so that people associate organic food with sort of a positive experience
> in a restaurant, but also sort of a high-end experience…I think that the concept
> that, you know food is fuel for our bodies, promoting the idea that the cheapest
> thing on the shelf isn't necessarily the best thing for your body right?

The discourses examined so far are significant indications of discontent with the

organisation of agriculture and agri-tourism in Niagara. Many of these discourses have

arisen out of involvement in resistant practices, while others legitimate and precipitate

future action. Since networks operate significantly through discourse, alternative

articulations have the capacity to disrupt networks.

Resistance was also easily gleaned through attention to the practices of alternative food actors. Here I was not in the position to observe my participants' practices but had them explain them during interviews. Practices of resistance were most significantly evident in the interviews with the CSA farmer and with the family of ecological farmers. These actors maintain a high level of food activism. While most interviewees had at least some engagement with the agri-tourist network (by working in wineries, selling to winery chefs, or operating tourist-based businesses), the CSA farmer has actively resisted enrolment:

> I've had calls from like some people in those places [winery restaurant chefs]...I like direct selling better...I feel a lot of, feel a lot or responsibility to them, you know whereas if I sold to a restaurant like I don't, a lot of, I have friends that have sold to restaurants and I think their bottom line is price. I know they want like unique varieties, but I think their bottom line is sort of getting the best value for their dollar too. And they can you know do what they do with it and charge people in restaurants a lot more [laughing].

As she explains elsewhere, she has also resisted selling her produce to local grocery stores such as Sobey's when she has been approached to do so. She does not like the face-less relationships associated with industrial food systems and prefers to engage in direct contact with her customers. This participant also practices resistance to commercial agriculture through a newsletter which she makes and distributes in her food boxes. Through this practice she circulates an alternate discourse in an attempt to persuade her customers to be conscious -- especially -- of environmental concerns, including but not limited to, the consumption of food. In response to a sign on a customer's lawn indicating that pesticides were sprayed, she explains how she addresses such issues in the safe space which is her newsletter:

> I've used my newsletter quite a bit to sort of talk about some of those things. So I've included you know commentaries on pesticide use in, on lawns...especially

> to concerns I have about products like Round-Up and those sorts of things. I've included all those things in the newsletter. Whether people buy into it or not I don't know, but those are the things that I always try to push....WELL, I talk a lot about genetically engineered foods and that kind of thing in the newsletter.

This same CSA farmer has been active in promoting and creating spaces of resistance through the Canadian Organic Growers (COG). COG meetings are spaces in which members become further educated about and committed to the principles of growing and consuming organics. The organisation serves as a supportive network, and its members have had success achieving regulatory change that further encourages organics. In addition to these acts of resistance, she and a friend initiated the establishment of a new farmers' market, which opened in the summer of 2003.

Similarly, the family of ecological farmers in my sample have been very active in local food politics. They encourage and support neighbours to undertake alternative practices (such as growing without pesticides) and alternative methods of distribution (direct sales). They take neighbours' produce to market with them, and also help others recruit customers for direct sales. Furthermore, they are involved in promoting and creating spaces of resistance through their involvement with the Ecological Farmer's Association of Ontario (EFAO). One of the family members says the "EFAO is about education, so sharing ideas; it's about building a broader community." It is a space in which people are encouraged to share strategies for opposing GM crops, herbicides and pesticides, and through which farmers further develop a discourse and practice of resistance. The organisation is committed to educating 'conventional' farmers, and enrolling more people into the ecological farming community. This same family member is also the chairperson of the vendor's association for the farmer's market at which he sells, and he has been a guest speaker in many classes at Brock University.

The practice of the volunteer in the community gardens is the last example of resistance I will highlight in this section. The official goals of the community gardens, according to the coordinator of the project (who works for Niagara Regional Housing), are to provide low income clients with an alternative to the food bank and a means of helping themselves rather than asking for a handout. As I indicated in the section on agri-tourism, the project implies that the poor must learn to produce food for themselves and not expect to be taken care of by publicly funded programmes. However, the volunteer -- who does the hands-on work with the participants in the gardens -- has drastically different goals for the project than the coordinator. Because of his position, he is more able to shape the actual experiences of the participants than the coordinator, whose position revolves more around planning activities and fielding phone-calls from her office. In a sense, the volunteer is subverting the goals of the organisation by offering the participants an alternate experience, one which he wishes them to have and which he values. He is less concerned with decreasing the dependency of low income people and more concerned with the retention of knowledge about growing practices and varieties that are threatened by corporate agriculture:

> The benefit from the project is really learning how to grow vegetables and we have as a society, we have lost the ability to do that. Especially North America, people are used to buying their food in grocery stores....But I personally think that it's not healthy for a society to depend on the grocery store, on commercial farming...We have vegetables that are disappearing, because it's not possible to produce, to mass produce them in a commercially viable operation, it just doesn't work. You can't do it. So those vegetables that disappear not because they're bad or because they taste bad, it's because people can not find them in the grocery stores, not because there is no demand, but because its, is not possible to develop a machine that runs a hundred and fifty acres of the crop...it cannot be the job of a project like this community garden to actually...produce the volume of food that would need to do that [feed low-income families]...It is simply something, it's an initiative to get people going, to give them a feel for what they are doing, and get them the know-how how to do that.

Here the actors that initially set the network into motion have lost substantial control over the operation and goals of the project without even knowing it (or at least it did not seem like the coordinator was aware that the volunteer was implementing a different agenda in the gardens). While the volunteer has not caused the dismantling of the network he has successfully subverted the goals of its authors.

This last example of resistance nicely draws this discussion back to the main and initial arguments of this section. Acts of resistance, however small or insignificant, provide important insights into the vulnerability of dominant food (and also, in this case, development) practices and discourses. While none of my participants are operating completely outside of dominant industrialised systems of agriculture, there are moments of resistance in each actor's discourse. Although most of the actors I interviewed are in some way tied to the agri-tourist network (with only two projects located completely outside of the network), in my interviews there are stronger discourses of resistance against agri-tourism than against corporate/industrialised agriculture more generally. This may be true because agri-tourist networks are less stabilised and more 'up for grabs' than conventional food networks in Niagara (although I do not wish to imply that conventional food networks are completely stable and unchanging). Agri-tourism is a rather recent strategy for economic growth in the Niagara Region. Therefore, there is currently more space for, and acceptance of, competing discourses about the direction of agri-tourism.

Through attention to practices such as education (about the reasons for resisting pesticides, herbicides and genetically modified organisms), the opening of spaces to support alternative projects, the rejection of enrolment into agri-tourist networks, and the

subversion of development initiatives, it becomes clear that the dominance of the agri-tourist and corporate/industrialised networks in Niagara is incomplete. In fact, the form and direction of agri-tourist and dominant networks are continually mutating and changing over time as actors find ways of asserting their own agendas through existing networks and enrolling more actors into new networks. This conceptualisation that posits networks as contested and unstable offers possibilities and hope for the development and further expansion of more just food networks in the future.

3.5 Alternative Networks and the Agency of Nature

Niagara food projects can be conceptualised as being organised in networks. In this section I take the projects in my sample as starting points from which to talk about networks, showing that alternative food networks include and are enabled by more actors than are recognised in commodity chain approaches. The intention, however, is not to consider each project as belonging to a separate network, but rather to use these projects as a point through which to enter into the multiple and messy relations that are characteristic of all networks. Thus, I also emphasise the ways in which the projects under study draw in, and on, similar actors and the ways in which the networks overlap. Another purpose of this section is to give special attention to the active and crucial participation of nature in alternative food networks by focusing on nature's enabling and restricting effect on alternative practices.

From the perspective of commodity chain analysis, alternative food projects in Niagara can be understood as short (or shortened) chains. Figure 3.1 illustrates a typical conventional food chain, where a commodity passes through many processes (in this case eight) and sites (including rural and urban spaces and multiple nation states from both First and Third worlds) from the field to the body. The length of the commodity chain matters, and many authors have documented the negative social and environmental effects associated with the 'longer' chains of conventional food systems. Indeed, what made the projects in my sample seem so alternative was their bypassing of many of the nodes, or processes found in these highly industrialised and capitalised conventional chains. The 'shortness' of alternative chains becomes clearly evident when figure 3.1 is contrasted with figure 3.2 (which outlines the commodity chains associated with the
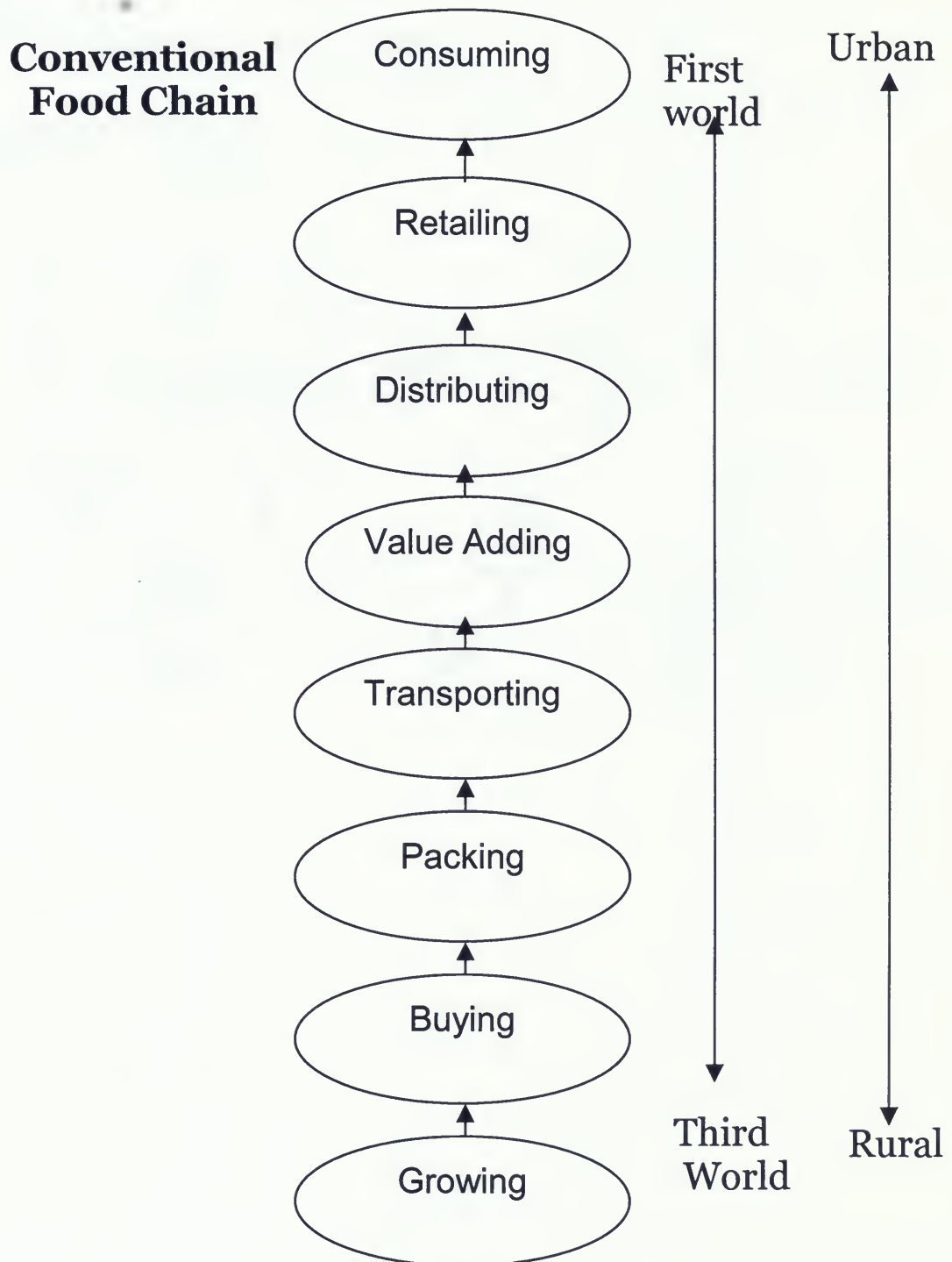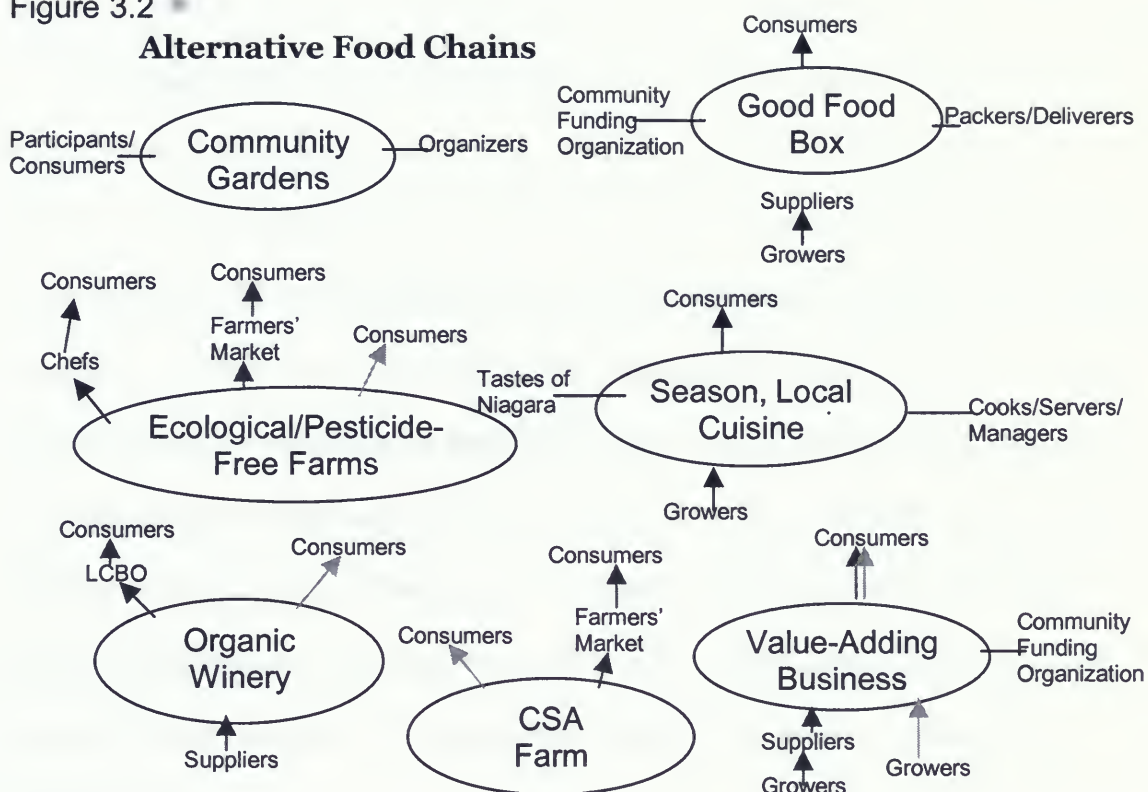
Figure 3.1

Conventional Food Chain

Consuming

Retailing

Distributing

Value Adding

Transporting

Packing

Buying

Growing

First world

Third World

Urban

Rural

91

Figure 3.2
Alternative Food Chains

projects in my sample). At the centre of alternative food initiatives is an attempt to remove intermediaries (especially large agri-food companies that often control more than one node in the chain). These intermediaries receive a much larger percentage of the profit than growers, and are often in positions of power over growers.

The chains associated with the projects in my sample, however, seem short only if traditional food actors are considered (i.e. those associated with the nodes shown in figure 3.1). Indeed, the commodity in alternative projects travels through fewer human hands, processes, firms and sites than it does in the longer (global) chains of conventional systems. From the perspective of ANT these seemingly short (and local) chains may be reconceptualised as constituted by and drawing on extra-local and non-human actors that the commodity chain approach does not recognise. Thus, if one includes in a network analysis, elements such as the policies, laws, material objects, and natures that enable alternative practices, the qualities 'short' and 'local' no longer apply. In the next pages I show that Niagara alternative food projects are neither as local nor as short as they initially appear.

Network conceptualisations are purposefully messier than those of commodity chains. Whereas commodity *chains* have distinct beginnings (production) and ends (consumption); in the spirit of ANT, *networks* are indefinite. In ANT, the scope of a study is determined by how far a researcher wants to follow the (animate and inanimate) actors, which actors she wishes to follow, or how 'big' of a picture she considers. Furthermore, a much higher level of interaction and/or connection is recognised within network analyses. For example, in ANT analyses singular chains can be easily

elaborated, however, it is important to consider the interconnections between these chains. Networks almost invariably link up at some point.

Chefs who grow with local, seasonal produce can be thought of as belonging to the same network, or as singular networks that have multiple points of connection. Most obviously they are directly linked to the Niagara agri-tourist network (even if they are also somewhat resistant to the agri-tourist focus on wine). Tourist councils solicit the opinions of chefs on such issues as the development of a mid-peninsula transportation corridor, and winery restaurants directly benefit from initiatives that bring more tourists to Niagara. The chefs in my sample are also linked through Tastes of Niagara, an organisation that promotes local regional cuisine, and is significantly tied to the agri-tourist network. Two of the chefs in my sample are also part of a local convivium of Slow Food. Through their association with Slow Food they are tied into a 'global' movement that originated in Italy.

Although chefs refer to their cooking as 'local' cuisine, it is clear that their networks extend beyond the 'local'. All three chefs have all spent time cooking in Europe, and incorporate what they have experienced and learned overseas in their current practices. For example, one chef has a vision for Niagara based on what he has seen while working in Europe. In one of those countries, agri-tourist restaurant/hotels receive subsidies from the government if they grow eighty percent of their produce on site. A second chef is also enthusiastic about implementing some of the structures and policies that he found helpful while he was working in Europe. Especially during his short stint working on the advisory committee of Tastes of Niagara, he has been pushing for the establishment of a central marketplace reserved for local chefs and farmers. He believes

such a marketplace would be highly successful since similar markets were well frequented by chefs and farmers in the places he worked in Europe.

The three chefs I spoke with have ongoing contact with other chefs from all over the world. They frequently host visiting chefs from other regions of Canada or other countries, and they often consult with their contacts via phone or internet to acquire new recipes or seek expertise. For example, in his interview, a chef stated "so you know, it would not be uncommon for me to call a chef anywhere and being that I can speak two other languages...I have no reticence to doing that." The chefs sometimes frequent chat rooms where they can converse with other 'foodies' located in different and distant sites. One chef, in particular, makes frequent trips to Europe for cooking classes and visits. When government funding was available, he also sent a few of his apprentices to work and learn in European restaurants. Such examples highlight that local seasonal cuisine networks are in fact not really local at all. Rather they are comprised of relations of knowledge and people that extend quite widely across space.

Although chain analyses neglect non-human actors, it was clear that interviewees saw such actors as playing important roles in their networks. Chefs, for example, see government policy as directly enabling and constraining their restaurant networks. For two of the chefs I interviewed the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act is a significant actor. The act dictates, through the Niagara Escarpment Commission, which activities/developments will occur on the escarpment. When asked by the interviewer, "Do you think a lot about the environment? Like the natural environment?", a chef replied:

> Oh yeah, TOTALLY, absolutely, we have to...it's pretty hard not to with the escarpment commission breathing down our necks. I mean we wanted to have a

patio in the back and we couldn't because it's too close to the escarpment. We wanted to trim back some of the trees so that you could see, have a view of the valley, couldn't do it because, well, we had to fight for five years to let them allow us to do it.

In local seasonal cuisine networks agency is redistributed away from chefs because of the attention chefs give to seasonality and locality and because of their direct relationships with farmers and their produce. Chefs repeatedly highlighted that their practice is dependent on the timing and success of crops. For example, the change from winter to spring menus occurs only after fiddleheads and asparagus emerge from the ground. This leaves chefs in a position of anticipation. Similarly, as one chef suggests, the dishes prepared on a single day cannot always be decided in advance. Sometimes farmers show up with an unanticipated crop, or sometimes crops fail completely (as did a recent cherry crop):

> Like when you get raspberries dropped off or you get a phone call that you have fresh smokies, well then you have to start, the brain cells have to start, well what can we do with that?

Indeed, such examples (the following included) show the extent to which nature matters in local seasonal cuisine networks. Here an explanation of a chef's efforts in bringing home a special onion show the importance of securing the 'right' nature:

> I have to wait another year before I get them but there's these onions that I found in [Europe]. They're this big and they're red onions, and I researched THE HECK out of that, I couldn't find it, I COULDN'T find it. So I went back a year later and I just smuggled a couple of the onions, I couldn't find the seeds so I smuggled some of the onions back so he [his custom grower] planted them, they have to grow, they have to germinate seeds, and then you have to plant the seed. So I have to wait two years for these, for these fricking onions, but they are, they're the most incredible onion in the world.

In local seasonal cuisine much attention is paid to the unique qualities of different varieties of nature. In this way agency is not only redistributed toward nature, but chefs

become sensitive to the differences among varieties of nature, and plants comes to be associated with a sort of character.

While each alternative grower in my sample (CSA farmer, ecological farmers, and pesticide-free farmer) could be understood as belonging to a different network (as was also the case with the chefs), I will talk about them here as networks that link up with each other and that cross or join other networks. For example, the ecological farming family and the pesticide-free farmer grow for the same winery restaurant and are thus also part of the agri-tourist network (as the chefs above). Furthermore, the CSA farmer and the pesticide-free farmer have both been active in the Canadian Organic Growers. It is also probable that the ecological farming family and the CSA farmer are linked through shared customers. I group them together in this section as producers/growers and talk about the ways in which their networks extend beyond the local and about the importance of nature in their practices.

An important non-human actor in the ecological farming family's network is a flourmill that they had sent over from Europe. This flourmill allows them to sell stone ground grain, something highly sought after by winery restaurants and farmers' market clientele. The mill has been particularly active in their farming network, drawing attention from farm associations and media. The family and their mill were once featured on Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) television. The mill, imported from Europe, also represents an extra-local actor in the family's network. That is, it is an actor cannot be considered 'local'; it challenges the conceptual boundaries between 'local' and 'global'. Although the mill currently operates at the 'local' scale it has a history that

extends beyond the 'local'. It is indeed a crucial contributor to the family income, and could cause serious consequences if it were to break down.

The father in this family understands his practice as emanating from his cultural background as a Russian Mennonite:

> ...I still grew up remembering very traditional agricultural patterns, in terms of animal production and grain production. The farm that my father grew up on was rather changeless from Europe, and my uncles and aunts who lived there, as a child I grew up watching them do things surely the way they would have done in Europe for hundreds of years.

Thus, when he farms, he is doing so not with an imagination of the local, but rather, is mobilising the practices and the places of his distant relatives. Through the EFAO he has met and maintained contact with people from all over Ontario, and is eager to meet other European (especially Mennonite) farmers.

The CSA farmer's practice is particularly characterised by relationships and natures that extend beyond the local. Through her membership with Seeds of Diversity and their Seed Saver's Exchange programme, she exchanges heritage seeds with people all over the world, although primarily with people within Canada and the United States. Thus, the plants in her garden are in fact extra-local natures, even though they are sold and marketed locally. She understands heritage varieties as somewhat special natures that each demand different treatment. In the following exchange she emphasises that unlike conventional farmers who do not need to listen to their crops, she is extra sensitive to the diverse needs of her plants

> CSA farmer:
> Like a traditional farmer is mono-cropping, so they're putting in a hundred acres or three hundred acres of corn, you know. On two acres I'm planting over three hundred different things so that's really a different thing. So then it's not like you can treat your whole two acres the same. You've got, everything has a different need like in terms of watering and fertilising, and crops need different things.

Interviewer:
So you get to know your plants a bit better?

CSA farmer:
Oh, well that's the biggest thing about growing organically is really being vigilant, so walking through your garden and looking for a problem or, you know, that's the biggest thing really.

It should be obvious by now that the rest of the actors in my sample (the winemaker, the director of the non-profit organisation, and the two participants from the community gardens) should be understood as belonging to networks that are not independent of other networks operating in Niagara. As discussed earlier, the winery and the non-profit organisation are completely tied to, or indeed part of, the agri-tourist network. Also, the non-profit organisation has a historical tie with chefs involved in Tastes of Niagara. In the early nineteen nineties, the two groups were brought together as part of a project initiated by Robin Murray (then working for the New Democratic Party government in the Community Economic Development Secretariat). The project involved a food study of Niagara, which helped to initiate the establishment of Vision Niagara (now called Tastes of Niagara) and the Good Food Box. The non-profit organisation still collaborates with the chefs and wineries associated with Tastes of Niagara. In fact, the value-added business associated with the organisation currently receives co-packing contracts from wineries. The community gardens project is linked to regional and civic government networks through the city of St. Catharines and the Regional Niagara Public Health Department. These are just some of the relationships that interrupt the conceptualisation of singular and disconnected networks.

It is particularly evident in the networks associated with the winery that grows organically and with the non-profit organisation that non-local actors are essential in

alternative practices. Since the winery that grows organically is one of the only wineries that uses organic practices in Niagara, she and her associates rely on the expertise of people at biodynamic and organic vineyards all over the world. The winemaker spent her life growing up on a vineyard and then working in wineries in British Columbia (B.C.), thus, she draws particularly on contacts from the B.C. organic wine industry. Such contacts are indeed significant actors in the winery's network; they directly influence the practices of the winemaker and her colleagues. Conferences are other sources of knowledge for both those involved more directly in the growing and for the winemaker herself. She attended the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements Congress in 2002, and also has a more regular source of support and education through the annual Guelph Organic Conference.

The transition for the non-profit organisation from cooperative housing development through the good food box programme to the current projects which include a value-added small business has been made possible by continual contact and exchange with people and organisations throughout the world. As the executive director expresses, when the New Democratic Party was ousted from the provincial government in 1995 and the Progressive Conservatives took over it became clear that co-op housing funding would wane. At this point the organisation began looking for alternate projects, primarily through contacts that the organisation had with the Canadian Cooperative Association. As part of this process, the director and her colleagues went on a study tour to Italy to learn about flexible manufacturing networks. They got the idea for the good food box through their studies in Italy and through people at existing projects in both Toronto and Syracuse. Through Robin Murray (mentioned earlier) the organisation established an

ongoing relationship with a team of researchers at a university in Buffalo that was familiar with a number of alternative food projects in the United States. After the failure of the good food box, the group went on a second study tour to West Virginia, North Carolina, and Ohio where they established contacts that have helped them in the process of building their kitchen and making the transition to a small business. These relationships, and many more, are actively maintained and have persisted over time. These contact people are significant actors in the organisation's network; they have had direct input into the goal-making process of and the directions taken by the organisation.

In pointing to the ways in which the projects in my sample are neither examples of local nor of global networks I am implying a theorisation of scale particular to ANT (which I outline in chapter 2). Following a similar argument made by Alan Latham (2002) in a study of the restaurants along Ponsonby Road, Auckland, New Zealand, I propose that traditional categories of scale (for example the local, the regional, the national, and the global) do not further an understanding of how Niagara alternative food projects operate in and produce space. Furthermore, labelling Niagara alternative food projects as 'local' endeavours may have the effect of ascribing them *a priori* with qualities that are commonly associated with the 'local', such as domination by the 'global'. In reality, the food projects in my study operate at multiple scales and draw on actors that defy global/local binaries. They do not display essential characteristics associated with being local.

Working with food, and nature, was seen as somewhat of a challenge for the director of the non-profit organisation, since the organisation had previously been

working in co-op housing. As the director points out, the central position of food in a network requires that certain concessions and special treatments are made:

> Interviewer:
> So In that way working with food was a lot different than being involved with co-op housing?
>
> Director:
> Oh huge, HUGE difference, well sure 'cause it's, *it rots*, right? If you don't get things on time *it wilts* and so then you don't have a very nice looking thing, you have to get it there on time. [emphasis added]

Indeed, if food rots, the network is disrupted and must be reconfigured by substituting other foods or compensating consumers for the loss.

The success of community gardening networks is completely dependent on the co-operation of nature. In fact, the network almost collapsed in 2003 when participants arrived at the pre-determined and fixed planting day to find that the gardens were too muddy to even stand in, let alone plant. The goals of the agencies running the gardens have been continually re-arranged to accommodate weather and failed crops. While the coordinator (from Niagara Regional Housing) explained in her interview that the gardens are meant to provide participants with enough food so that they do not have to frequent food banks, the volunteer, who works in the garden with the participants sees this as an unrealistic goal. Thus far, participants have not gone home with a huge bounty of produce, and this is largely due to the ways in which nature has acted (or, in the perceptions of the organisers, failed to act) in the gardens. Indeed, the volunteer understands, that working with nature is highly unpredictable:

> It's nice to work with living things, that's what keeps it interesting, yes they're not as predictable as steelworks….well the goal is to make it as predictable as possible, and sometimes when you're training [people to grow], I sometimes tell them that our job is not to grow things, things grow by themselves, our job is really to know what disasters could possibly happen with a crop and to avoid them.

In this quotation, nature is not only constructed as unpredictable, but it is also understood as having the capacity to act, i.e. to grow by itself. Thus, gardening is not seen as something that is done to nature or done in nature, but as a collaborative project between humans and nature. Here, nature has the capacity to disrupt the network by failing to play its part; that is by failing to grow.

The arguments I have made in this section are quite particular to actor-network theorisations. The purpose has been threefold. First, I have shown that rather than singular and independent networks, the projects in my sample can be understood as belonging to multiple networks, or to networks that link up with and interact with other networks in Niagara (for example in section 3.3 I discussed how many of the projects in my sample are linked to agri-tourist networks). Second, I have argued that the characterisation of alternative food projects as belonging to short and local chains is misleading. In fact, Niagara alternative food projects are sustained and constrained through the involvement of extra-local actors. Last, I have highlighted that participants in this research consider a variety of natures as important and active agents in their networks. In the final section I turn to questions of justice and relations of power between various actors in alternative networks.

3.6 Relations of Power: How Alternative?

In the process of choosing my sample, I somewhat arbitrarily classified certain food projects as 'alternative'. As discussed elsewhere, my main criterion for selecting projects was that they, in some way, circumvented dominant (industrialised and capitalist) systems of food production, distribution and/or consumption. More specifically, these projects were associated with rather 'short' and 'local' commodity chains. The purpose of this last section is to explore questions of justice and power. Was I initially correct in classifying these projects as alternative? To what extent are power relations reconfigured and equalised in alternative food networks? Do the commodity chain qualities of 'short' and 'local' (which I have suggested do not properly apply to network analyses) translate into more just food systems?

In many political economy and commodity chain analyses power is understood as something which is inherent to particular actors (Smith, 2003: 19; Herbert-Cheshire, 2003: 455). These dominant actors (for example large agri-food corporations) have stores of power and a plethora of techniques through which to wield it on dominated actors (most often these are farmers or agricultural workers). The GCC and political economy literature has been concerned with tracing a few key indicators of exploitation and domination. Analysts have traced the accumulation of profit and found that workers and farmers make increasing less over time, and agri-food corporations make increasingly more as they expand both vertically and horizontally. Control over the various nodes in commodity chains has also been examined. Because farmers and workers are in positions of relatively little bargaining power, firms have been able to successfully dictate the specifications of production (eg. what to produce, using which

inputs), taking autonomy away from the former. Firms are also capable of investing in and imposing technologies on farmers in order to speed up or intensify the production process. Many such technologies (for example herbicides and pesticides) may be detrimental to farmers' and workers' health and wellbeing.

Where farmers are relatively independent in the production process, political economy and GCC approaches have highlighted that they are nevertheless price-takers rather than price-makers. Furthermore, in order to secure markets for their produce, farmers have to adhere to the schedule of buyers, and present produce that meets the aesthetic standards of buyers and consumers. Political economists have also pointed to the ways that neo-liberal states have further weakened the position of farmers by decreasing farm subsidies, and dismantling collective marketing structures (marketing boards) and various other public infrastructures. Finally, analysts have criticised food companies for locating production in peripheral (often Third World) countries/sites where they can take advantage of lax labour and environmental laws.

ANT analyses of food networks have been much less concerned with these traditional questions of power. Rather, as I have outlined in section 3.4, actor-network theorists understand power as relational and complex. In ANT power is not exerted in a unidirectional and predictable way by a class of dominators on a class of dominated. Since all actors in ANT are organised into networks, actors are understood as belonging to relations of mutual dependence. While relations of power in networks may be unequal, the authors of networks are nevertheless dependent on the compliance of the other animate and inanimate actors. As Hughes (2000) argues in her study of the power of retailers in cut flower networks, it is politically useful to "still recognis[e] the existence

of sets of actors (or nodes), whose work it is to shape the circulation of a particular commodity" but at the same time insist that "the connections between these actors are…complex webs of interdependence rather than fixed, vertical and uni-directional relationships" (178). Her conceptualisation suggests that at any and every moment there are possibilities for the disruption or destabilisation of a network.

For actor-network theorists, it is not so interesting to study who has power and how much. Instead, these theorists are concerned with understanding how power flows through networks and is the *effect* of the associations between actors. Since relations are constantly being produced and reproduced, the flow of power in a network is subject to fluctuation. While the overall picture may appear to be one of domination of one actor over another, a more in-depth examination may confirm that there are moments when the flow of power is upset. In order to study the flow of power one must pay attention to the spatial and temporal variability of associations. While maintaining an actor-network theorisation of power, Sarah Whatmore and Lorraine Thorne (1997) are interested in how networks become "lengthened" and "strengthened" and thus made durable. Duarability as a quality does not suggest that relations of power are static and unchanging, only that these dynamic relations produce a (temporary) pattern or regularity. It is suggested that when networks are made durable there is the possibility that they become dominating to some of their constituents and to those outside of the network (Star, 1991).

It should be clear from how I have described the projects in my sample thus far that none embody the extreme inequalities that political economists of food and agriculture have repeatedly highlighted. However, it would be naïve to assume that Niagara alternative food projects are free from all inequalities and power relations. *The extent* to

which these projects offer alternative relations of power is quite difficult to judge. This is especially true since I have not followed all, or even multiple, actors in the same network. Thus, when a chef tells me that he always pays a just price to his contract farmers, and I have only interviewed one or two of those farmers, I cannot know whether producers also feel that these prices are just. In such circumstances I do not generalise the perceptions of the two farmers I have interviewed, but rather evaluate the cases that I know. An assumption I have made in this section is that a participant's discourse may correspond to her practice. For example, if someone explains another person with whom they deal as someone who lacks self-direction, I have assumed that her treatment of this person may well reflect the discourse.

I begin this section by highlighting the inter-dependence of actors and the relationality of power in Niagara alternative food networks. I show that relations in 'alternative' food networks are *particularly* characterised by these two qualities. This is why it is so important to resist ascribing *a priori* status to actors based on their social class or economic function. The actor-network conceptualisation of power is also important for maintaining theoretical space for practices of resistance. I continue in this section by turning to questions of justice. Here I have used some of the analytical categories with which political economists and GCC analysts have been concerned, without giving up a relational theory of power. In particular, I pay attention to the price received by producers and the level of autonomy they maintain. Finally, I also consider relations of power between human and non-human actors.

It was clear from my first interviews that relations of power in Niagara alternative food projects did not reflect those I had been reading about in political economy

literature. This is true not only because all exercises of power (no matter how coercive they appear) must be received and accepted, but also because marginal actors seem to be in positions of relatively greater bargaining power in Niagara alternative food networks. Where power relations are less asymmetrical it is easier to glean their inter-dependent nature. While the following quotation is taken from the perspective of a chef, it nevertheless highlights that there is a three-way relationship between three sets of actors in the restaurant's network.

> I mean how many people live in Niagara know about [the Roberts]? Know that they're growing spelt grain, I mean, do you know what is spelt first and foremost? Secondly, who's growing this spelt, thirdly how do you use spelt? It takes people like me that…I think I already mentioned this to you a little triangle between the grower myself as a chef and the guest [i.e. consumer] to keep that cycle moving all the time.

Here it is the relations between actors that, in part, produce the character of the restaurant. Spelt has to be constructed through a number of discourses and relations so that it is understood by consumers as a desirable, healthy, and exotic grain. Also, the farmers have to be successfully enrolled into a stable relationship with the restaurant. Printing the name of the farmers on the menu helps to characterise the restaurant as connected to the community and caring about the health of the environment and the consumers. Thus, it is the restaurant's relationships with its customers and with its farm suppliers that ensure the continuation of the 'cycle' to which the chef speaks above. Similarly, the farmers are reliant on the construction of the grain in the way described above, and the consumers' relationship with the restaurant.

This mutual dependence is similarly expressed by a second chef:

> It's sort of come full circle in that the restaurants are now supporting all the growers again, so in the beginning it was the growers who were, WANTED to grow produce but didn't have a venue for it unless they took it to Toronto or took it to markets.

Now because they've supported the restaurants the restaurants can support them again by saying I want a custom grower, can you grow me thyme, I'll take two bushels a week for as long as you have it, or whatever vegetables.

Here it is implied that relations of power are dynamic and shifting. This chef understands the growers/farmers as having played an important role in initiating local seasonal cuisine. When restaurants were new and the demand for local seasonal cuisine was still small, growers presumably had better bargaining positions than they do now. On the other hand, as this chefs points out, the stability of the industry as a whole means that growers now have more secure outlets for their produce (although they also face increased competition).

Many of the participants I interviewed saw knowledge (or lack thereof) as key to the functioning of their networks. The wine-maker highlights that buyers rely quite heavily on the knowledges of growers. To some extent growers exert a degree of power in a network by having access to knowledge that buyers do not typically hold. For the organic winery, the lack of knowledge about organic growing practices among Niagara wine farmers means that they must invest much time and trust in developing a pool of talent that will remain faithful to the company:

Well experience base, we can't just hire somebody who knows how to do it, everybody has to be trained, and so that's good…because they can learn what you want them to learn. It's bad because you can't just hire somebody and put them in place…There are some people [farmers] who are educated and do things from an educated standpoint, and then there's other people doing what they learned from their parents or their father or whatever. And they might have only picked up a portion of what their dad knew, right?

The community gardening project is also challenged by the lack of knowledge that participants have about how to grow and harvest produce. These are knowledges that are taken for granted by the volunteer who has much gardening experience:

> You also have to know…how to harvest and when to harvest and how the food is
> supposed to look like. And I was really surprised that people had a hard time of
> telling how to harvest a head of lettuce…or when a tomato is ripe…or what do
> you do with it for that matter. So I was trying to help there last year…but when I
> came in first, I come in there with 15, 20, 25 years experience doing this kind of
> stuff and you lose track of what people know and what they don't know.

The project fails to fulfil the goals of the coordinator precisely because participants lack

the required knowledge. While the coordinator wishes the participants to harvest enough

food so that they do not frequent food banks, participants have spent most of their time

learning to identify and take care of plants. This lack of knowledge among participants

disrupts the power dynamics of the network and upsets the intentions of the coordinator.

All three of the growers in my sample were involved in relationships that were

significantly alternative; i.e. ones where the grower's bargaining position was notably

elevated, and where decision-making and price-setting were largely in the hands of the

grower. For example chefs complain that:

> …because our margins are so small…we are at the mercy of the growers, and
> that's where a lot of, I mean there's a lot of meat and cheese companies where we
> say we can't….because you know, whole milk is more expensive, and this is more
> expensive, and that's more expensive…but they have to understand that we're in
> this business to make money as well…they think oh, just raise the menu price.
> Well if we raise the menu price then we're going to be chasing people out the
> door because no one will want to pay for it.

Another chef hopes that the balance of power in his relationship with growers will

change:

> …With the bigger place we should be able to have more buying power, and we
> should be able to draw MORE of the farmers to us, rather than us running after
> the farmer, which right now that's the case, because I'm so small.

However, despite all three producers having said that they were price makers rather than

price takers, none made enough money from farm income alone to subsist. All relied on

off-farm income to subsidise their farms. One grower has two other jobs, another works

full-time as a tool and die maker, and a third grower has worked as a social worker and now relies on her husband's income to make ends meet.

The CSA farmer just recently (in 2003) started selling some produce at a new local farmer's market. She deals with no intermediaries, rather only directly with consumers. This arrangement allows her to cut out buyers, retailers and other corporate actors that typically exert more power in food systems. As she observes, because of her direct contact she is also able to command a better price for her products; she would receive less were she to sell it to the grocery store that has approached her. The CSA model provides her with some level of security as she knows that a good portion of her produce is already sold as she puts the seeds in the ground. This is not the case when she takes produce to the farmers' market. In her operation, she is free to grow nearly whatever she likes. She mentioned that a few customers ask her to grow certain vegetables, but that she ultimately plants the crops best suited to the soil conditions, or varieties to which she is particularly attracted.

The ecological farming family sells most of its produce at a local farmers' market, some to a winery restaurant (the chef of which I also interviewed) and also to consumers through farm gate sales. Like the CSA farmer, they are quite happy with their ability to set their own prices. Indeed, they take price setting very seriously

> One family member:
> …we sell for a just price, we don't sell at a highly elevated price, but there will be people who will come and say, well, at A&P they're only this much this week. And we usually say, you are welcome to go and get them there, we're not lowering the price. This is our price because we need to earn a living…

> Second family member:
> One thing people have said to us about the ecologically grown produce is that we should charge more, and I've always resisted that 'cause it smacks of gimmickry to me. That's not why I'm in this, just to make a buck on it. There's a principled

reason that we've made choices to do things this way, and I'd like to be able to sell it for certainly a just price as [his wife] says, but not uh, any increased premium.

These comments were made about setting prices at the farmers' market where they sell both conventionally and ecologically produced crops at the same price, even though consumers seem to be willing to pay more for the ecological produce. This practice of setting ecological prices equal to conventional prices helps to increase the availability of ecological produce to lower income groups that would normally not be able to afford the price premiums on organic produce (although these prices are still not as low as those of some grocery stores).

Both the pesticide-free farmer and the ecological farming family sell to the same winery restaurant. The ecological farmers seem to be fairly happy with the relationship, stating that the chef there has never argued with them about price. They usually charge the restaurant whatever they would charge at the market and feel they have always received a fair price for their produce. What is difficult about the relationship for the family is timing. They have given up growing produce specifically for the restaurant as the chef there is always changing menus and once wanted:

> ...Tomatoes for instance, when they weren't ready yet, they [the buyers at the restaurant] were really looking for them and needing them, and then when I had them, everybody else did too, and so it was like, ok, now you don't need as many. So, it's a LITTLE bit precarious...I was trying to grow some things just for them...But it didn't always work. And so now I only grow what I know I can grow well here, and I would then take it to the [local] market if they don't need it.

Overall, the pesticide-free farmer also feels that the restaurants with which she dealt were fair. She grew heirloom varieties specially for them at their request, and they always took whatever she had as it became ready. For a number of years this participant

felt the relationships were quite favourable, although a recent incident led her to stop

dealing with a chef at one of the winery restaurants:

> I was never into it to make a lot of money, I wanted to be fair though. And last year
> when we tried to sell our gooseberries, and that's what really turned me off at the
> restaurant was they started dickering price with me. And I wasn't prepared to do
> that. I guess somebody along the line in the last couple of years has decided that
> they will get rid of their wares at ANY price, and that's not the way it's supposed to
> be.

This quotation is especially significant as it suggests that although farmers' bargaining

position is improved in these alternative networks, chefs can still take advantage of the

competition among atomistic farmers. Some form of collective marketing may be a

scheme that would further improve farmers' ability to derive a living from their farms. In

the meantime it seems that, in some ways, the farmers in my sample are in positions that

are relatively more just than farmers in conventional systems. The inability, however, of

alternative producers to make a living is indeed troubling. As my participants note, their

practices are much more labour and time intensive and they farm much smaller plots than

many conventional farmers. Thus, in order for alternative producers to survive they must

command higher prices.

The producers above seem to have forged fairly positive relations with the

environment. They have nearly complete autonomy in the production processes and have

all opted to cut out pesticides and other agri-chemicals. Some express that the time spent

in their fields is quite intimate. Their practices are labour intensive and allow them to

become quite close to what they are producing. All producers expressed that a form of

listening and watching that allows one to be sensitive to the needs of different plants is

required when multiple and special varieties are being cultivated. They all sell their

produce locally and unprocessed, which translates into fewer negative environmental impacts.

Chefs seem to feel that local seasonal cuisine requires some capitulation of power and flexibility on their part. Instead of sourcing food from a couple large vendors, who have the advantage of economies of scale (and thus lower prices), they must deal with individual farmers. Furthermore, the sourcing of local produce means they are quite dependent on the local rhythms of nature. The management of twenty or more growers poses much strain on chefs; different growers ask for different prices and they are not always able to deliver the amounts they initially promised. For chefs, this means they are not always able to plan ahead. Local growers are not as reliable as large vendors since vendors are able to compensate for failed, late or unexpected crops by tapping into their longer global networks and acquiring produce from hundreds of growers in many different countries and regions.

All the chefs interviewed stated that they always pay a fair price for whatever they buy from growers. This was indeed supported by the experiences of the pesticide-free farmer and the family of ecological farmers, although both the pesticide-free farmer and the chef admit (in this next quotation) that chefs do sometimes challenge growers' prices:

> Chef:
> I pay top dollar, there's no question about that. Oh, and by the way, if I'm paying too much I let them know. It would be silly for a supplier to gouge, you know what, in the long run we both lose. But you're not being intelligent about the rapport; you're not being intelligent about the practices of communication and respect. Just because you're the only person growing figs doesn't mean you can charge three bucks a fig.
>
> Interviewer:
> So how do you negotiate that price?
>
> Chef:

> We normally do that on almost a daily or a weekly basis. You know Mrs. [Doe]
> shows up with all these herbs, and they're wonderful. And I've told her if they end
> up in the garbage I'm not buying her herbs any more. It's real simple. So either
> don't bring me too much, grow what I need, and make sure the chefs are using it.

The last section of this excerpt points to the preference that the chefs have for fostering direct relationships with their growers. Two of the chefs interviewed have 'custom growers' who operate on informal contracts. Under such arrangements, chefs buy (at a pre-arranged price) the full amount they requested at the beginning of the season, even if demand falters and they no longer need it all. However, unlike contracts associated with, for example, industrial chicken growers, alternative growers are not responsible for fulfilling their contracts if that crop fails. When crops are lost or fail the chef simply pays the agreed unit price for however many units are left. These informal contracts with restaurants have thus been fairly attractive enterprises for alternative growers. For chefs, custom growing is favourable as it allows them to have more of a say in the growing process. Chefs will ask for certain crops or varieties to be grown, visit the farms in order to inspect farming practices, and expect to be consulted in decision-making. For example, if a crop is under threat of being eaten by a pest, the grower will phone the chef to ask permission to spray. Although the chefs actively support pesticide-free and organic practices they will most often prefer that the farmer spray if the crop is under threat of loss.

Despite the more equal relationships between alternative chefs and growers than between conventional buyers and growers, chefs in my sample still exercise more power. If chefs simply cannot find a grower or reasonably priced produce they still have the option of buying from more conventional vendors, whereas growers are only able to receive a just price for their labour and time through networks that attach a higher value

to their produce. Few growers are actually certified organic, and would therefore suffer economically if they had to sell their pesticide-free produce, or heirloom varieties through conventional channels. Furthermore, chefs are in the business of adding value and sell their meals to wealthy consumers who can afford to pay fifty dollars per plate. By those attending restaurants, chefs are understood as possessing an artful skill; they have attended post secondary education, have spent time training in Europe, and are part of larger establishments that lend them prestige. Growers, on the other hand, are not always seen as skilled or particularly cultured. Adding 'value' is often understood as a process occurring in the kitchen rather than the field.

The good food box programme and the value-added business that uses local produce (both are projects of the same organisation) have had more success redistributing power towards (working) poor populations than towards farmers per se. Indeed, the major goals of these two projects have been to provide employment and employment skills training to disadvantaged populations. While the value-added business now concentrates specifically on helping women develop and bring their recipes to market, the good food box programme employed and trained both men and women in such activities as book-keeping, truck driving and packing. The larger mandate of this organisation can be characterised as community economic development. Through the various projects of the organisation many people have secured short-term jobs, and the skills and experience to acquire more long-term employment, but these jobs have mostly been in the service and agri-tourist sectors.

Both the good food box and the value-added business have also been organised around using local produce. The good food box was fairly successful in securing local

produce in the summer months though direct contact with farmers, and also by convincing a No Frills grocery store to buy (together with the organisation) from local farmers. When the No Frills came under new management the local buying was promptly cancelled. Interestingly, the organisation was largely unsuccessful at enrolling organic farmers. According to the organisation's director, the organic box failed primarily because organic farmers' were less able to consistently have their produce picked and ready at the specified times (I was, however, unable to get a clear explanation of why organic producers were perceived as less organised than the conventional producers with whom they were dealing).

Sourcing locally is also a mandate of this value-added business. However, as the director notes, the business has been unable to buy much of its produce from small farmers:

> …the vision and the reality are sometimes diverse. We've had to go to larger farmers that have the equipment to process. So for example peaches, if we had to skin every peach and cut them, you couldn't make eight hundred jars at a time, so we have been able to source farmers that have the pitting, whatever machinery to chop the peaches into bags.

In this case, it seems that the organisation's inability to significantly reconfigure relations of power with farmers is due to its entrenchment within the agri-tourist industry. It is competing with other mainstream capitalist businesses and must be concerned about economies of scale, and generating profit for its shareholders. The restaurants, however, have been able to relieve themselves from competing with other mainstream ventures (fast-food and other chain restaurants) by tapping into the 'slow food' trend (which emphasises quality, seasonality, and care). While this 'haute cuisine' niche has allowed the restaurants to foster more equal relationships with growers, it raises questions of

justice with regards to access and the environment. Indeed, those who sell the produce to the restaurants can scarcely afford to eat the finished product. Winery restaurants are primarily made for wealthy tourists; only a small segment of the Niagara population can afford to eat at such establishments. Furthermore, while the chefs all spoke about the measures they take to, for example, recycle food and other materials, and conserve water and energy, wineries and their associated restaurants are guilty of occupying much space, using agricultural chemicals on their vines, employing exploitative labour practices, and consuming many resources for washing dishes and linen, and cleaning, lighting and heating their establishments. The value-added business has similarly been unable to extend practices of justice to relations with nature. Through local sourcing it has succeeded in reducing the transportation of produce. However, the business has not been able to afford to buy from organic or ecological producers, and consumes ample resources in the production process.

The organic winery faces some of the same challenges, with regards to justice, as the restaurants and the value-added business. All three projects are fairly traditional capitalist enterprises which have undertaken reforms that incorporate some levels of increased justice without challenging the structure within which they operate. Indeed, the winery that grows organically, like the restaurants, is able to exploit consumers' concerns for their health and the environment by charging extra for organically grown wine. Most bottles of wine from this winery cost more than fifteen dollars. Organics come to be just another quality through which markets can be differentiated. Rather than a philosophy of justice, organics become practiced for their lucrative niche value (Guthman, 2004).

Despite its exploitation of lucrative niche markets, the winery has undertaken some significant reforms. It has encouraged the growing of grapes organically; a method of production which is almost unpractised in the Niagara Region. Organic production of grapes has positive consequences for the local ecology and for the growers who do not have to deal with dangerous chemicals. Furthermore, the winery often pays growers more than the regulated price for grapes on the condition that they are grown with fewer pesticides or through more labour intensive methods. This provides a market for producers wishing to decrease their use of pesticides and other agri-chemicals. The winery also incorporates other 'environmentally friendly' practices into their operations. They have a small parking lot and use gravity rather than pumping machines in the wine-making process.

I have elsewhere characterised the community gardening project as a development project. Indeed, discourses of development are easily gleaned from interviews with the coordinator of the project. Interestingly, development discourses do not dominate the interviews with the person who volunteers in the gardens. It is fair to assume, from the discourses of the coordinator, that participants in the community gardens are treated like development subjects. They are seen as needing incentives to get involved in the programme, which assumes they would otherwise be a burden on charity organisations and social services. The next quotation clearly demonstrates that relations of power are quite unequal in this project. Here organisers see themselves in roles similar to those of parents who psychologically manipulate their children through threats and enticements:

> And also it [the plot] has to have value. So if they think that if they don't take care of their plot you're going to give it away, or they'll no longer be welcome to participate, or somebody else could use it, they're more likely to continue on with it.

While the participants are treated like dependent subjects who lack the knowledge and skills to provide for themselves, the status of nature in this project is quite positive, and negative environmental impacts are slight. Participants are given the opportunity to learn from nature and to understand how plants grow. They come to understand something of the 'natural' history of their food. Furthermore, many of the activities associated with the project operate outside of the market economy; only tools and seeds are obtained through the markets. The produce is grown and consumed by the same person, thus it passes through almost none of the nodes associated with commodity chains. This reduces negative environmental implications derived from activities such as transportation. Most of the participants in the community gardening project in my sample walked to the gardens.

While I have discussed both the positive and negative contributions of Niagara alternative food projects in this section, I suggest that the projects in the sample do indeed offer alternatives to dominant, industrialised systems of food production. Significantly, they provide methods through which consumers can express resistance to conventional food systems. They also provide opportunities for increased levels of justice and for *more* equal relations of power. Producers in my sample are in relationships that allow them to have more control over the production process and more autonomy in price-making. Ventures such as the organic winery, restaurants, and the value-added business have incorporated 'green' reforms that lighten their impact on the environment. These ventures have also provided markets for alternative producers that are maintained through trust rather than certification, and that offer producers a more just price for their produce and more autonomy in their practices. Last, the community gardening project is a

complete alternative to conventional channels, but is burdened with unequal relations of power (characteristic of many development projects) between participants and organisers.

The classification of 'alternative' does fit the projects in my sample (but this does not suggest that the projects are not in some ways engaged in dominant and agri-tourist networks). While many projects offer alternatives to industrialised and globalised systems of production and consumption, few offer alternatives to capitalist systems of production, and none are significantly *oppositional* (in fact some have successfully exploited consumers' concerns for their health and environments). If dominant food systems are going to be significantly challenged, there will have to be a more concerted and oppositional movement on the ground, and in the fields. Projects that completely bypass or come close to completely bypassing capitalist relations (such as community gardening, and to a lesser extent the CSA model) are more able to pose serious challenges to dominant systems. While entrepreneurial enterprises should be recognised for their successful employment of reforms, their capitalistic spirit and exploitation of lucrative markets should not be overlooked. Perhaps the significant resistances to the ways in which agri-tourism is pursued in Niagara could become points of entry into more oppositional politics and practices that would pose more serious threats to dominant industrialised and capitalist systems of provision.

Conclusion

The overarching goals for this thesis project have been to understand food as a topic of justice, and to do so without excluding the realm of the non-human. More specifically, I have used actor-network theory to examine the nature of alternative food projects in Niagara and the extent to which they offer alternatives to dominant food systems. My analysis probes into four areas. In section 3.3, I was interested in how Niagara alternative food projects interacted with and were affected by the material and discursive construction of Niagara as an agri-tourist landscape. I examined agri-tourism in Niagara as a network to which many of the projects in my sample belong. Here I argued that the mutually reinforcing discourses of business-development-tourism that circulate through the network play a crucial role in extending the network's reach and durability. I suggested that agri-tourism is being aggressively pursued by development planners, tourist corporations, private businesses, and government.

In section 3.4, I focused on discourses and practices of resistance among Niagara alternative food actors. In the interviews with my participants the most forceful discourses of resistance were against agri-tourist rather than dominant food systems more generally. I argued that these discourses and practices provided important insights into the vulnerability of agri-tourist and dominant networks. In section 3.5 I sought to conceptualise Niagara alternative food projects as networks that are complexly linked to a variety of other networks. I also insisted that the networks associated with the participants with whom I spoke are enabled by a variety of non-human and extra-local actors. In the last section of analysis (3.6) I examined relations of power and questions of

justice in alternative food networks. I showed that many of the practices of alternative food actors in Niagara resulted in more equal relations of power. However, I highlighted that certain actors still shape networks and that relations with the natural environment could be further improved. Throughout this thesis I have drawn attention to the possibilities that are opened up by applying actor-network theorisations of power, agency and scale to Niagara alternative food projects.

In each section of this thesis I have tried to portray the complexity that I have found in the field. Perhaps the most important insight that has arisen out of this research (and indeed the most confusing for the reader) is that the projects in my sample do not nicely fit into the dominant/alternative dualism that is used by most authors writing about alternative food systems. Rather, I have confounded this dichotomous conceptualisation by proposing that Niagara alternative food projects be understood as belonging to networks rather than systems. In this conceptualisation there is not *one* dominant food system and *one* alternative food system. Instead, the projects in my sample are part of multiple and overlapping networks. For example, some projects are simultaneously engaged in agri-tourist and alternative food networks. Alternative food networks are thus not a separate category of reality in Niagara (and neither do I suspect that they are a separate category elsewhere). In fact, despite performing many of the roles of 'alternative' networks, the projects in my sample also partake in exploitative practices characteristic of dominant systems. I have mapped these projects onto discourses and practices of development, business, and class distinction.

With regards to the theorisation of scale, this thesis puts forth a second important contribution. While commodity chain approaches understand alternative food projects as

belonging to 'short' and 'local' chains, the projects in my sample defied notions of global and local, and short and long chains. This is especially true if the analytical focus of a study is widened to include an examination of the role non-humans play in alternative food networks. The actors I interviewed all spoke about how they relied on extra-local actors (both human and non-human) from across the country and throughout the world in order to sustain their projects. Flourmills from Europe, seeds from across Canada and the United States, friends and mentors located abroad, and onions from afar were all crucial actors in my participants' networks. This leads me to conclude that Niagara alternative food networks are enabled by more actors (including nature, institutions, technologies and others) than are recognised in commodity chain approaches.

Some of the findings of this research are relatively bleak. For example, the majority of the projects in my sample are tied to the agri-tourist network; a network that strives to develop a lucrative niche market for local seasonal cuisine among elite tourists. Also, as discussed in section 3.6, a few actors still wield more power in Niagara alternative food projects. Furthermore, I have suggested that the projects in my sample cannot be understood as belonging only to alternative networks, nor can they be conceptualised as completely separate from dominant and agri-tourist networks. These arguments could logically lead to the conclusion that the projects in my sample have been mislabelled, that they cannot be understood as alternative projects.

I think the projects in this study can be understood as alternative projects, but that the label should be applied critically. Specifically, alternative food projects should not be understood as belonging only to alternative food networks, nor as being free from all the relations characteristic of dominant food networks. However, while it is important to

trace the ways in which projects perpetuate practices and discourses of injustice, it is equally important to point to the ways in which relations of power are reworked in alternative food projects. A conceptualisation of power as relational and productive is key to making sense of how alternative food actors are able to structure their projects in ways that are not typical of dominant food networks. In Niagara, agri-tourist networks are highly dependent on maintaining stable relationships with alternative growers, and alternative producers have profited from the construction of Niagara as a high-end agri-tourist destination. Other participants in my research indicated that they have been able to manipulate the network to their own advantage. More oppositional practices are too few among Niagara alternative food projects, however, some examples do exist. A few actors have resisted enrolment into the agri-tourist network, or have operated completely outside of the network. Explicitly oppositional practices will need to be fostered if more just food networks are to exist in the future.

Although most of the projects in my sample do not perform oppositional roles, they are associated with increased levels of justice. Producers seem to have more autonomy and command better prices than they would if they sold through conventional networks. Wineries and winery restaurants have been able to sustain ongoing relationships with growers, and have implemented environmental reforms. The community gardening volunteer has partially subverted the development goals of the funding organisation. Furthermore, those who are still in positions to shape their networks have nevertheless been integral to the enabling of alternative practices. The groundwork laid by these alternative projects in the reworking of power relations may be essential to the process of building more oppositional practices.

In a 2002 paper, Gibson-Graham calls for the explicit representation of economic difference in discourse. Gibson-Graham see this project as crucial to the formation of new subjectivities, those that "liberat[e] the subject from the economic identities provided by the discourse of globalization" (36). The project is to be accomplished by making a diversity of market and non-market alternatives visible by putting them into academic and popular discourse. Gibson-Graham suggests that special attention be paid to non-capitalist economic activities. The circulating of such discourses will contribute to the stability of alternative projects and will encourage the further development of alternatives. Once these alternatives circulate prominently in discourse it becomes easier for subjects to take up the associated projects.

It is my hope that Niagara alternative food projects (and in a less significant way, this thesis) can be understood as contributing to the project laid out by Gibson-Graham of putting alternatives into discourse. However, as this thesis has shown, a level of critique should be maintained when discourses are circulated about these alternatives. While Niagara alternative food projects are not yet in positions to pose significant challenges to dominant food networks they have been able to assert themselves as competing methods and discourses of provision. Their presence helps to remind citizens of Niagara that alternative forms of economic relations do exist. Movement toward more oppositional food practices and more just food networks will only happen with the understanding that there are a variety of methods through which to produce and consume food.

Appendix A

In 1967, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss published a book that laid out their recommended approach to qualitative research, which they named grounded theory.[14] Glaser and Strauss make it clear that their primary goal is to encourage (specifically) sociologists to move beyond "the doctrinaire approaches to verification" (7) of existing theories and towards the generation of new theory, understood as a project more conducive to freedom and creativity. In this way grounded theorists are emphatic in their rejection of a purely deductive approach to research where one formulates a hypothesis based on an allegiance to a certain theoretical perspective or on a logical deduction informed by the existing literature in a field of study, and then tests or verifies it in the field (Strauss, 1987:12). To advocate an approach to research that rejects deduction and the use of a priori theoretical frameworks is to advocate the development of theory that is 'grounded' in the data and therefore in a specific locality and time. In this way, theory can be traced back to what the researcher saw, heard, felt, or experienced in interaction with the specific participants or objects of the research. Grounded theories are thus subject to modification, updates, or rejection as empirical realities shift; they are provisional in nature (Strauss and Corbin 1998b: 165).

Grounded theory is premised on a rejection of the ontological underpinnings of deductive research. Early deductive research in the social sciences was performed in such a way as to emulate that done in the natural sciences (Strauss and Corbin, 1998b:

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[14] The early development of grounded theory is credited to American sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (see Glaser, 1978, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987). It should be noted that more recently Glaser and Strauss have disagreed about the technical refinements of grounded theory. Strauss's collaboration with Juliet Corbin saw the publication of two books on the techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin 1990 and 1998).

160). This positivistic view of reality posited that human behaviour and social phenomena are subject to similar laws as natural phenomena. Further, human behaviour can be predicted since humans react to their environment and are not independent agents (May, 1993). If human behaviour is, thus, a cause and effect relationship, knowledge about it can be gained through conducting experiments much like those used by natural scientists. Deductive methodologies follow the scientific process of forming a hypothesis and then proving or disproving its validity. Such research calls for the maintenance of objectivity as the primary methodological concern. Objectivity is considered to be both attainable and desirable.

Grounded theorists, claim to take a post-positivist stance, understanding truth as not just "out there" but rather as "enacted," interpreted, and socially constructed (Strauss and Corbin, 1997: 171). However, this description of the nature of reality seems to be at odds with the ontological underpinnings of empiricism, the tradition with which Derek Layder (1982: 103) firmly identifies grounded theory. According to May (1993: 5-6), empiricists, like positivists, understand that there is a realm of 'truth' that exists independently of human interpretation. From this perspective, an action can be interpreted differently by different individuals, but a researcher can know and understand the phenomenon independently of the interpretation.[15] For empiricists, a link can be made, for example, between what people say they do, and what they 'actually' do. It is the task of researchers to follow techniques that enable them to 'neutrally' evaluate an interview so as to draw out 'factual' information that is reflective of 'objective reality'.

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[15] This epistemological position is rejected by those who subscribe to hermeneutic/antifoundational traditions where emphasis is placed on the interpretive process of the researcher and her text or subject. According to the antifoundational position, reality does not exist independently of one's interpretation of it, and these interpretations change over time and across space.

This is not to say that empiricists are not interested in people's interpretations and experiences of certain phenomenon. However, they recognise these interpretations as non-objective accounts of independent truths.

Grounded theory, with its roots in symbolic interactionism, has been most concerned not with describing an independent reality but with describing the reality of people's experiences and of the meaning they assign to interactions, actions and phenomena (Eaves, 2001). Symbolic interactionists and grounded theorists are labelled empiricists more for their understanding of the relationship between research and theory than for their commitment to an empiricist ontology (as explained above). Empiricist research often lacks theoretical guidance, and has as an end the presentation of data (May 1993: 5). In a certain sense, grounded theory resembles empiricist research in that it does not use theory to guide and frame the research. However, unlike the empiricist model, grounded theory does not endeavour to present peoples' experiences, actions, and interactions as they are. Rather, it aims at generating theory and thus, the researcher spends much effort on interpreting and conceptually organizing the data. While grounded theorists agree with empiricists that the use of theory in the early stages of the research "enforce[s] separations, establish[es] boundaries and block[s] useful access to phenomena," they see an important use for theory during the later stages of research when the researcher may gain insights by making comparisons between his/her emerging theory and established theories (Layder, 1982: 105).

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990; 1998a) a researcher should begin a study with a very broad question so as not to constrain the direction of the study. The researcher's question evolves and is narrowed during the course of the data collection, as

the researcher discovers the concerns, needs and perspectives of respondents and begins to hypothesize important conceptual categories and links (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 37). 'Sensitivity' to the theoretical literature in the area of study should be gained before or while entering the field, but in order for the study to be grounded in the data rather than the literature, a researcher must refrain from choosing a substantive theoretical perspective through which to frame the research.

As the researcher begins to collect data s/he simultaneously begins analysis, deducing possible commonalities from the data collected and 'verifying' them by conducting subsequent interviews and comparing data. This is a process in which the researcher is involved in moving "back-and-forth" between collecting data, returning to old data, analysing it, and proposing conceptual categories (Strauss, 1987:19-20). Conceptual categories are "verified" as the researcher returns to her/his respondents and asks more pointed questions meant to test, clarify and "fill out" emerging categories. As categories become saturated (no more data can be found to add to them or further define them) the researcher is able to hone the category that will be at the centre of the emerging theory. The findings of a grounded theory study are the new theory that explains conceptually, in an original way, the phenomenon, process, or interaction under study (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 255-256).

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