THEORIZING FOOD JUSTICE: CRITICAL POSITIONALITY AND THE
POLITICAL ECONOMY OF COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEMS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI‘I AT MĀNOA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

POLITICAL SCIENCE

August 2013

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Keywords: Food; Food Justice; Politics of Food; Critical Theory
For my father...
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Abstract

Organized around three spheres of engagement - the community, the economy, and politics - this dissertation examines how critical positionality is driving the formation of intentional communities rooted in difference. It offers three primary contributions to the discussion of alternative agrifood movements and contemporary resistance to neoliberalism: 1) The concept of critical positionality, as a way of recognizing and conceptualizing the destabilization of identity within a practical context where identity and difference still matter; 2) A non-capitalist reading of food justice work, showing how organizational strategies for financial sustainability tactically engage the neoliberal system while at the same time creating an alternative; 3) a theory of tactics, applied to the political realm through an examination of food policy councils, offering tactical policy activism as a possible orientation for food justice organizations who need to engage the state.

First it examines what critical positionality looks like in the context of concrete organizational action, both internally and through community outreach and engagement. Examining the core conceptual features of ‘community’ within food justice work, it lays out an everyday politics of difference as the onto-political grounds for a new political economy. Then, it shows how critical positionality frames the strategies of food justice organizations’ struggle for economic viability, arguing that the themes of social entrepreneurialism, worker empowerment, and community-focused economic growth should be understood as non-capitalist. The economic activism of food justice work hybridizes the possibilities within capitalism, eschewing its exploitative relations while at the same time understanding the power it nevertheless has to shape communities. Finally, it analyze the role of critical positionality in driving the formation and the critique of food policy councils. Just like the non-capitalist economic strategies of food justice organizations, I build upon the strategies of Kanaka Maoli with the State of Hawai‘i, and through the case study of Legalize Pa‘i‘ai, show how tactical policy activism offers a way for structurally disempowered groups to engage the state without simultaneously endorsing the legitimacy of that state or having their work co-opted.
By suggesting that individuals and organizations can affect meaningful change within the system while at the same time working day to day to transform it, this dissertation uses the food justice movement as an opportunity to envision pathways towards a more just and sustainable world by identifying the spaces where such a world is already being enacted in the here and now.
Acknowledgements

Writing this dissertation has been a long journey that would have been impossible without the unfailing support of my family and friends: My husband, Matthew, who always believed in me, who put his career second when I needed him to, and rushed home/left for work late so that I could write and travel; my mother, who moved to Hawai‘i and provided a third leg in our family’s parenting structure; my daughter who always trusted that I would come home; Patty, Cherub, and Amanda C who were the best aunties I could ever ask for.

I am honored to have written this dissertation with the support of the Department of Political Science and Sea Grant. Nevy, Kathy, Debbie, and Mike provided an amazingly rich reservoir of theory that drove the development of this work. Aya helped link me into an unfamiliar and yet vast world of food studies and patiently guided me to key texts and players already thinking about these ideas. Hokulani Aikau, as my Sea Grant PI, taught me how to put theory into action, and firmly guided me as I waded through the complexities of my own positionality within Hawai‘i’s food movement. Extra thanks to Debbie for reading innumerable drafts and ‘getting’ my argument when it made no sense on paper.

Academia is of course more than the classes you take or the papers you write. My graduate colleagues Rohan, Lorenzo, John S., Aubrey Y., Sam, John M., Jairus and Nicole H. allowed me to wax philosophical, helping me evolve as a thinker. My friends Allison, Marissa, Cessi, and Nate kept me grounded when I started to drift into the ivory tower. My team at Baby Awearness, Nicky, Julliet, Lani, Shandis, Jennifer and Marisa helped build a local business that played a part in a building a better economy for Hawai‘i’s families. The Hawai‘i Food Policy Council, Amy, Amanda, Kim, Leslie, Elise, En, Derrick, George, Cat, Vivian, and Cherub taught me what leadership looked like and gave me something to work towards.

And finally, I would like to thank my dad, to whom this dissertation is dedicated. Without the values he instilled in me as a child, the courage and confidence he gave me as a thinker, and the financial support he continues to provide even after his death, I would not be where I am today.
Note on Interview Transcripts and Citations

I conducted formal, recorded interviews with over 20 food justice organizers and activists from 2010-2013; and over 50 more in a more informal setting. On average, each formal interview was two hours long. All formal interviews were transcribed. Informal post-interview conversations continued in person and by email.

While I do not directly cite all of the individuals inform and inspire this work, I am indebted to everyone for their time, work, energy, and brilliance.

When I do cite interviewees, I use direct quotes, edited only for clarity. For the sake of the reader, and in order to distinguish these lengthy quotations from interviews taken from other texts, I reference them in following format: (OI) signifying it is an Original Interview, followed by their last name and the year of the interview (OI: Last Name, 2010). Full citations are available in the bibliography under OI.

When requested, I have retained the anonymity of the interviewees.
Chapter 1: An Introduction

This dissertation reflects deeply on the importance of identity, always in a state of flux and yet always being fixed, as it informs the political imaginaries and political practices of community food movements. Emerging out of a personal and professional journey that involved living in Hawai‘i, teaching at a Land Grant Institution, researching alter-globalization movements, owning a small business, and forming the Hawai‘i Food Policy Council, I profoundly changed my proposed hypotheses on the political practices of contemporary alternative agrifood movements. Perhaps more than I intended it to be, this dissertation reflects the journey of a community member trying to find a space for herself within a local, grassroots, social movement organizing for a just, resilient, sustainable, culturally informed local food system.

Food is a primary means of power. It lures countries and economies into the global capitalist market place; it subsequently explains and makes real the extent of their disenfranchisement. When one examines the historical underpinnings of the contemporary political economy, food (in the form of aid, commodities, diets) and agricultural policies (export-oriented production, liberalization of agricultural trade, reduction of agricultural subsidies, etc.) are central features of the global expansion of capitalism. Food marks the body, revealing the corporeality of power and capitalism (e.g. the juxtaposition of the starving body, the anorexic body, and the obese body – all differently marked by the structures of capitalism). The body mediates the relationship between food (as capitalism in its most essential commodity form) and the subject (as the performative site of capitalist (re)production).

Food is also an incredibly effective tool for resistance. When people and countries reclaim their food sovereignty/security (defined as the capacity of communities to maintain and control their own food systems), they are more capable of negotiating the terms of their larger political relationships – both with national and foreign governments. While the industrialization of food has stripped communities of this power, it has also sparked widespread resistance from local communities, from the Movimento Sem Terra in Brazil to Slow Food in Italy, from Navdanya in India to the Coalition of Immokalee Workers in Florida (Mertes 2004; Notes from Nowhere (Organization) 2003; Shiva...
Known more generally as Alternative Agrifood Movements (Allen 2004), they aim to reconnect people to land and food, to improve health and wellness, and create new social and political relationships through food.

While my love of food certainly underlies this topic of this dissertation, as does the significant role food plays in the politics of globalization, both in the instruments of power and the tools of resistance, it was the process of reflecting on the complexity of my own positionality within the modern American settler state of Hawai‘i that I was drawn to the notion of food sovereignty and food justice. As one thread among many in the larger movement of movements, food justice organizations ground their work in a critical conceptualization of identity and difference, or what I am calling critical positionality. As I will argue, this grounding significantly impacts how they went about solving the problems within their community, the economy, and the food/policy system.

Food justice organizations often work to provide basic conditions for healthy livable communities. In 2010, over 17 million households in the United States were either food insecure or very food insecure. Close to four million of these households included children. Food insecurity was substantially higher for people of color, particularly black and Hispanic households (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2011). Simultaneously, the US, and particularly low-income communities of color, are facing an epidemic of diet related health disorders. In 2007–2008 more than one-third of United States adults were obese; Non-Hispanic blacks have the highest age-adjusted rates of obesity (49.5%) compared with Mexican Americans (40.4%), all Hispanics (39.1%) and non-Hispanic whites (34.3%). Obese individuals are at increased risk of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and certain cancers, among other conditions. In 2008, medical costs associated with obesity were estimated at $147 billion; the medical costs for people who are obese were $1,429 higher than those of normal weight (CDC 2013; Coleman-Jensen et al. 2011; Critser 2003).

Thus, as I attended to these material realities and theorize the politics offered by organizations that address the root causes of these material needs, Donna Haraway’s cautious call to action was my ethical guide: “We need the power of modern critical theories of how meanings and bodies get made, not in order to deny meanings and bodies, but in order to build meanings and bodies that have a chance for life” (Haraway 2007).
1988, 580). To use critical theory as a way to better understand and better participate in social organizing and political action inherits the tradition of activism out of which critical theory emerged.

The politics of resistance practiced by food justice organizations challenge Foucauldian conceptualizations power and offer a pathway for thinking about a post-neoliberal politics (Sommer 2006). When we look closely at the core themes within the organizational decisions and day-to-day realities of food justice work, we can see how critical positionality, understood as an attentiveness to difference and power as it structures material conditions, denaturalizes neo-liberalism and the political solutions available within the neo-liberal frame, opening up the possibility for an already present transformative politics of resistance being enacted in the here and now. Such a re-conceptualization of difference within and among social movements is absolutely necessary in order to (re)claim the possibility and viability of non-capitalist, non-modernist, non-liberal politics. As we resist a political and economic system that describes itself as an “end” to history and social/economic change, it is vital that we combat the teleological, totalizing narratives which claim and co-opt political action, and render radical alternatives impossible. In the interviews and analyses of these organizations that inform this analysis, and in the process of making decisions as an organizational leader, I saw agency where before I only saw complicity. I saw strategy where before I only saw conformity. I saw resistance where before I had only see the blindness of ideology. Multiplying my own perceptions of the possible, recognizing that within the multiplicity of subjects and actions transforming the industrial food system, food justice organizations offer a framework for thinking about many worlds that exist within and despite of neoliberal globalization’s expansion and domination.

Neoliberal Globalization

Neoliberal globalization is the ideological context for contemporary food justice movements. Understood as an amalgamation of institutions, power relations, and ways of seeing the world, theories of neoliberal globalization offer a way to understand the contemporary iteration of colonial-capitalism, and the resistance movements that have emerged in response (Hardt and Negri 2000; Stewart-Harawira 2005). Therefore, neo-
liberal globalization also provides the context within which to understand a politics of resistance in and around issues of food and agriculture. This dissertation assumes that although the theories and imaginations of change within grassroots social movements are explicitly and implicitly informed by the institutions, power relations, practices and imaginations that characterize neoliberalism, they are not completely defined by it. Rather, social movements (and their NGO counterparts) can reinforce the neoliberal order and, perhaps more importantly, tactically intervene, work against, and create alternatives to neoliberalism in the lives of communities.

‘Neoliberalism,’ ‘Empire,’ and ‘Corporate Globalization’ are key terms used to describe our contemporary political economy. All signal to the formation of a new era of global power relations, held together by a corporate-controlled transportation and communication network that compresses time and space (Harvey 1990), fueled by the propensities of the marketplace and the never-ending search for profit opportunities, and managed by a network of supra-governmental institutions and regional and global trade agreements aligned with the interests of corporate dominated capital. In one of his many prescient moments, Karl Marx imagined our global economy as it is today:

Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real condition of life and his relations with his kind.

The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the entire surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere.

The bourgeoisie has, through its exploitation of the world market, given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country…All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civilized nations, by industries that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed, not only at home, but in every quarter of the globe. In place of the old wants, satisfied by the production of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations….
It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image” (Marx and Engels 1978).

Although Marx may not have been able to imagine the internet, the iPhone, or a network of jumbo-planes criss-crossing the globe, he understood the constitutive relations of capitalism necessitated expansion and the formation of a global economy that would privilege the free movement of capital, particularly in the form of investment, and the management of labor-mobility through militarized borders and immigration control.

Organized according to the logics of specialization and comparative advantage, urging nations to engage in economic activities that yield greater efficiencies and increased productivity, the economic theories underpinning neoliberal globalization and development, as the most recent incarnation of a capitalist orthodoxy, equate welfare with growth. Relocating to where they can “produce more efficiently in terms of labor costs and economies of scale,” multi-national corporations and the financial markets that undergird them play a critical role in advancing the integration of underdeveloped economies into the neoliberal marketplace (Stewart-Harawira 2005, 209). The World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank (WB) evolved¹ to administrate the economy according to this logic, professing the mantra of the market and proclaiming it as the best mechanism through which to organize social, cultural, economic, and political relations. Charged with “overseeing, administering, and enforcing a set of global trade rules,” and implementing a form of economic development which would integrate new economies into the global marketplace, these supranational institutions administer economic policies wherein the needs of the free-market and business take “precedence over state sovereignty, human rights, and environmental concerns” (Stewart-Harawira 2005, 207). These institutions conflate corporate interest with public interest, and define a global political agenda that consistently protect the rights of profit and private property over the rights of people.²

² Although in the United States corporations have the rights, protections, and legal standing of people, also known as corporate personhood.
As we will explore at length in chapter 2, the industrialization of agriculture and food is an integral component to neoliberal globalization, creating export oriented agricultural policies in the global south accompanied by import oriented, processed food preferences in the industrialized north. Industrial agriculture reflects the core logics of comparative advantage and specialization, transforming a food system once defined by a fabric of locally oriented, diversified family farms into a massive global network of monocultural mega farms that focus primarily on commodity crops, valued and traded on global stock exchanges.

Qualifying their vision of a free and unregulated market is the continued military and economic dominance of the United States, and its disproportionate leverage within the supra-governmental institutions managing the global marketplace. Thomas Friedman writes, “The hidden hand of the market will never work without a hidden fist. McDonald’s cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas, the builder of the F15. And the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley’s technologies is called the United States Army, Navy, and Marine Corps” (T. Friedman 1999). From the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy, to the invasion Iraq, the US military has long served the interests of corporate elite in securing access to the world’s high-value resources (Kinzer 2006). US military power is on hand to open markets when the promises of “free-trade” and the lure of “western lifestyles” cannot, and stabilize or pacify public outrage at mandated austerity. Indeed, because today’s deregulated global marketplace heightens the tendency towards crisis inherent in capitalism (Roy 2004), giving rise to “melt-downs,” and “crashes,” the government and military forces are integral to the functioning of neoliberalism in controlling public dissent and securing public monies for corporate “bail-outs” and security (Klein 2007).

In order to create markets where there are not, development projects within the neoliberal paradigm, often led by private corporations, introduce and accelerate the processes of commodification through [mandatory] privatization of common-pool resources, restrictions on government expenditures [in order to create a greater demand for private services], the liberalization of financial barriers [in order to facilitate the influx of foreign direct investment], and the easing of regulations and restrictions on capital, from environmental regulations to fair labor standards. Indeed, what distinguishes the
neoliberal model from prior hegemonic theories of capitalism is the back-seat role it allots for government services, regulation, policy (M. Friedman 1962). Particularly in contexts where Keynesian theories of economics created a particularly strong social safety net for times of economic stagnation (Klein 2007), the rise of the neo-liberal paradigm has been characterized by the slow dismantling of government services and the entry of private firms, corporations, and non-governmental organizations into spheres traditionally run by government, including military services, emergency food provision, health care, and education. Naomi Klein writes, “The ultimate goal for the corporations at the center of the complex is to bring the model of for profit government, which advances so rapidly in extraordinary circumstances, into the ordinary day-to-day functioning of the state, in effect, to privatize the government” (Klein 2007, 15). “Austerity” and “Sequestration” are the most recent terms used to describe a fiscal policy agenda that profoundly restricts the social programs of the government while enabling continued and increased profits by large corporate firms.3

Neoliberal development, the formation of a global free-market, and the rise the US military to protect these corporate interests both at home and abroad, facilitated the formation of a supranational class of economic elite and multinational corporations. Indeed while the neoliberalization of the global marketplace has led to an incredible, exponential increase in productivity, the distribution of this growth has been uneven, increasing the gap between those who control and benefit from the system and those that do not. This globalization of extreme concentrated wealth and inequality typical representations of a world divided into the “North” and “South” or the “First” and “Third.” The globalization of inequality is particularly important in the context of this dissertation because it focuses in on the processes, structures, and ideologies of neoliberal development as they have created a ‘Third World’ within the ‘First World’ (Davis 1990, 3

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3 As the March 6, 2013 Democracy Now! headline reads, “Global markets have soared after the Dow Jones Industrial Average hit record levels. The Dow rose 0.3 percent on Tuesday, surpassing a previous high set in 2007. The news had a ripple effect, leading to strong gains in stock markets in Europe and in Japan. The New York Times reports the United States is in the midst of a "golden age for corporate profits." The boom is partially attributed to high unemployment, which allows companies to keep wages low. Recent figures show corporate profits accounted for more than 14 percent of national income in the third quarter of 2012, its largest point in over 60 years. The portion of income going to employees was nearly 62 percent, its lowest point since 1966. An analyst at Bank of America Merrill Lynch said the recent sequestration will have a "minimal" effect on corporate profits, adding that nonetheless "the market wants more austerity" (Goodman 2013).
marginalizing and disenfranchising communities based on race, class, citizen status, and gender.

Integral to the institutionalization of neoliberal economics and the creation of a neoliberal system of global governance, is the creation of the subjectivities necessary for its actualization. Indeed, rooted in modern essentialist ontologies, neoliberalism’s theory of economic growth assumes that all humans possess an inner essence or deep seated ‘nature’ with universalizable characteristics: “self-interest,” “brutishness,” “will to power,” being some of the most important (Hobbes 2005; Locke 1952; Smith 2000). Building on Foucault’s concept of bio-power and a society of control whereby power is no longer externally located but rooted in the subjects themselves (Foucault 1977, 1978, 2003, 2010), Hardt and Negri write, “The great industrial and financial powers thus produce not only commodities but subjectivities. They produce needs, social relations, bodies and minds – which is to say they produce producers” (Hardt and Negri 2000, 32).

Neoliberal bio-power involves a remapping of imaginations and perceptions of possibility. The power of neoliberalism lies not only in the material impacts it has on people’s lives, communities, economies, and environments – particularly those that lie outside of the dominant networks of global capitalism – but also in its capacity as a hegemonic ideology to capture and colonize our imaginations, our perceptions of the possible. As Hardt and Negri write, “it is a subject that produces it own image of authority. This is a form of legitimation that rests on nothing outside itself and is re-proposed ceaselessly by developing its own languages of self-validation” (Hardt and Negri 2000, 33). In its construction of the imagination, and the valorization of particular futures and ways of being, the reproduction of neoliberalism requires the continual reproduction of its relations through a process of ‘call and capture,’ a constant ‘seeing’ of itself in the world, in individual practices, processes, and relations, thus reifying the socio-ontological assumptions that underpin its theory of politics. Neoliberal discourse emphasizes the ‘natural’ self-interest of human beings, our uncontrollable tendency towards competition, our lust for consumption, and our need to accumulate power, wealth and control. This discourse is the means through which alternatives to neoliberalism, as they persist despite its ‘rise,’ are captured, claimed, colonized. By requiring that all alternatives map onto capitalism’s scale and intensity, ie that any alternative to capitalism
have global potential and promise, neoliberalism once again captures non-capitalist micro-relations as outliers, impossibilities, naiveties, regressive, and antiquated.\(^4\)

Increasing inequality, constant crisis, and decreasing government capacity has further increased the role that non-governmental organizations (NGOs), foundations, and non-profit organizations have to play in the maintenance and management of global civil society. The meteoric rise in the wealth of a very small class individuals scattered across the globe means that there is a class perfectly poised to provide a model of “assistance” and “charity” that is deeply invested in maintaining the structural economic underpinnings of the status quo. NGOs are integral to the fabric of global neoliberalism, for while “global capital attacks the power of the nation-state from above…NGOs function as a “parallel strategy ‘from below’” and present the “community face” of neoliberalism” (Hardt and Negri 2000, 313; Petras 1997). The function of nongovernmental organizations within the neoliberal order is complex; they not only provide services to communities in the face of government absence or collapse; they also function as a form of privatization, providing tax shelters to the wealthy who would otherwise put these funds into government controlled coffers (Incite! Women of Color Against Violence 2007, 9). NGOs and non-profits also participate in the processes of neo-liberal subjectification. Hardt and Negri write, “These NGOs extend far and wide in the humus of bio-power; they are the capillary ends of the contemporary networks of power” (Hardt and Negri 2000, 313). For Hardt and Negri what these NGOs do is introduce a ‘governmentality’ into everyday political subjectivities that reproduces the necessity of the neoliberal order to solve the problems it created, such that the programming that is provided seeks to treat symptoms rather identify and treat root causes.\(^5\)

In summary, understanding the politics of community based food justice organizations requires attention to the institutions and logics of neoliberalism, the

\(^4\) Contemporary neoliberalism gestures to the fall of ‘communism’ and the rise of the United States as the lone global superpower, as the proof of its only teleological ascendency and supremacy (Fukuyama 1992): today, there is is ‘only one model’ for prosperity and progress: the coupling of free people and free markets (Bush 2002).

\(^5\) As Christine Ahn writes, “Many Americans are seduced by the idea that piecemeal voluntary efforts can somehow replace a systematic public approach to eliminating poverty. But this reasoning is based on the inherent falsehood that scarcity – rather than inequality – is the root of these persisting social and economic problems” (Ahn 2007, 63).
processes of subjectification it relies on, and the role NGOs play in this process. However, it also requires that we identify spaces of autonomy and resistance within neoliberalism, in order to expound upon the possibilities that lie therein. Critical positionality, or an understanding of one’s self in relation to the matrices of power within the neoliberal order, as well as a commitment to transforming such relations, is integral to this process. Communities that are situated outside of the neoliberal imaginary tend to understand its limits that we are always capable to find and inhabit its cracks, its fissures, its outside, inside. What the food justice movement suggests is that even in the core of neoliberalism’s global cities, in the places where is promise is most felt, the hegemony of neoliberalism as an ideology for organizing human relations is always being called into question. Understanding this relationship between political action, power, and resistance is an alternative way to understand contemporary neoliberalism, not through its imaginative and imagined totality or hegemony, but in its failures, its gaps, its incoherence, its scrambling.

Critical Positionality

Carving out spaces for community-based autonomy, building community in the places where the neoliberal promise is most mythical, food justice organizations build upon-on rather than homogenize difference, and this attention to difference figures centrally into their programs, process, and impact. Critical Positionality is my attempt to think about when and how identity negotiation is rendered explicit in practice, thus politicizing the process of identity as it grounds political action. It suggests that the destabilization of one’s sense of ‘the’ self, and the critical reflection on the relations of power through which one’s self is known, is a gateway towards politics and the processes whereby meanings are made and the frames through which subjects and subject matter make sense. Understanding the intersectionality of power, critical positionality, as a methodology of political activism and coalition building “refuse[s] primacy to either race, class, gender, or ethnicity, demanding instead a recognition of their matrix-like interaction” (Butler 1989, 16 qtd in; Hill Collins 1991). Striving to see the ways in which difference[s] map onto bodies and minds non-hierarchically, critical positionality thus provides grounds for thinking of new “emancipatory politics” that “attend[s] to multiple
forms of subordination and to a plurality of social needs, interests, and desires; in short, a politics of difference rather than one of identity” (Gregory 1998, 19).

As explored throughout this dissertation, food justice work emerges from diverse communities; individuals identify as Black American, African American, Pan-African, Latino, South American, Central American, Asian, Local-Asian, South Asian, Haole, European, white, and/or Caucasian; as First-nations, Indigenous, Native-American, Settlers, and/or Colonizers; as Citizens, Non-Citizens, Immigrants, Migrant workers with papers, workers without papers; as women, men, transgender, gay, lesbian, and/or queer; as rich, poor, and middle class; as institutionally-educated, life-educated, employed, unemployed and/or under-employed. Above all else, food justice work is defined by its constituency’s intentional and cultivated hybridity and the ways in which this hybridity receives explicit attention within the movement (Alkon and Agyeman 2011). The coalition-building entailed in such work requires a theory and practice of contending with power and difference in ways that do not minimize how these differences matter (Butler 1993). Whether it is through critical historiography, dismantling racism workshops, developing alternative economies, or tactically engaging the state, critical positionality is an oppositional practice that takes the subjective hybridity of people and places as the basis for all political action.

Post-Structuralist, feminist, and critical theorists have developed and deployed the concept of positionality as a way of understanding how subjects and subjectivity are always already overdetermined and intersectionally constituted (Althusser 1972; Gibson-Graham 2006b; Hill Collins 1991). Positionality is an attempt to grapple with the multiple structural and material relations of power that construct an individual’s social and self-identification. Complex identity formations are understood not as additively related; rather, within theories of positionality, race, class and culture (along with other

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6 Food, and the movements that form around it, demand a form of research and engagement that sees ‘mattering:’ the ways in which power materializes through matter (in the form of bodies, environments, cultures, etc) and produces knowledge (or things that ‘matter’) (Butler 1993). Power matters, it is corporeally and imaginatively productive and socially produced and negotiated. Identity, as it is explored in relation to resistance movement, is my attempt to think about the materiality of power as it frames the intelligibility of bodies in spaces of community. Community, then is the space of self-other relationality through which knowledge is produced and identity is both fixed and negotiated. We are not only what we will ourselves to be, but what we are in the eyes of the other – what we are understood to be.
identity markers) are understood as interlocking phenomena, shaping and simultaneously being shaped by consciousness, ways of thinking, bodies, practices, environments, and relationships (Hartsock 1983, 288; Hill Collins 1991). As such, the concept of positionality allows us to make reference to the lived realities of identity without also claiming that one’s subject position and relationship to structures of power are fixed and determined. Over-determination, used in conjunction with positionality, suggests that we are always more than the identities we are ascribed in social situations, and that this excess shapes our relationships to power (Althusser 1972; Gibson-Graham 2006b).

Positionality, intelligibility, and performativity ground my theory of subjectivity, knowledge, and politics within social practices and social contexts, allowing for a way to think about the negotiability of identity in political action and coalition building. Emerging from the same sense that knowledge, truth, and being are always already in a process of destabilization and revelation (Heidegger 1993), positionality, as a way of understanding power and subjectivity, rejects the foundational essentialism of modernity and neoliberalism. Rather, within theories of positionality, the subject emerges through a field of complex and often times antagonistic social relations and the intelligibility of one’s identity is always contingent, in the process of negotiation, and deeply contextual. Lisa Wedeen writes, “Intelligibility does not presuppose grasping an inner essence or getting into the heads of information, understood as captive minds of a system, but rather centers on the ways in which people attempt to make apparent, observable sense of their worlds – to themselves and to each other – in emotional and cognitive terms” (Wedeen 2009, 89). Related to this is the concept of performativity, as a way to articulate the relationship between power, knowledge, practices, and subjective formation; “the iterative character of speech and bodily practices constitute individuals as particular kinds of social beings or “subjects.” Through the repeated performance of practices, in this view, the person’s desires, understandings, and bodily comportment come to acquire a particular and recognizable form” (Wedeen 2009, 88). We enact our identity in a field of

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7 As Steven Gregory writes, “identities are constructed through social practices that “position” people as subjects within complex hierarchies of power and meaning. These identities, or “subject positions,” are neither static or uniform since their constituent meanings and relationships are practiced and rearticulated across a variegated political and socioeconomic field shot through with social antagonisms” (1998, 11).
social relations, and politics is a part of the social process whereby we come to ‘make sense:’ to know and un-know ourselves through our work with others.

Positionality is intimately related to knowledge, both ways of knowing and ways of being known. The self and the other are always in a dialectical relation with one another. As such, knowledge is always already situated (Haraway 1988) and reflective of one’s position within the “matrix of domination” (Hill Collins 1991). To say that knowledge is situated and that all knowledge makers and articulators are positioned is not to repeat the accusation that our/this knowledge is finite, relegated, too specific for the standards of science and the academy. Rather, situated knowledge and positionality challenge the hegemony of objectivism and universalism as the pathways to “Truth.” While objectivism belies the plays of power to construct and police the borders of objective truths, constructivism forbids us from acknowledging that power also makes real differences, differences which are felt and lived and have material impacts worth exploring and theorizing. As such, an epistemological and political practice of positionality “is about limited location and situated knowledge... It allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see” (Haraway 1988, 583 emphasis added).

Focusing on “learning,” “seeing,” and “knowing,” as a process of power rooted in social relations, critical positionality intentionally multiplies the “truths” that matter and explain where we’ve been and where we can go. It pluralizes history and the possibility of a future still unwritten.

An interpretation of practices reveals the incompleteness of power as well as its capacity, nevertheless, to shape bodies and matter. Critical positionality requires an attunement to practices, or those actions or deeds that are repeated over time and the agency that exists for bodies and subjects that engage in the processes identity formation. Practices are “learned, reproduced, and subjected to risk through social interaction…Like actions, they involve “freedom, choice, and responsibility, meaning and sense, convention, norms, and rules” (Pitkin 1993, 242). They may be self-consciously executed, but they need not be. They intend to be intelligible to others…in context-dependent ways” (Wedeen 2009, 87). Locating theory in practices means that “marginal” and/or “banal” facts, ideas, actions, and observations are understood as always already rife with power and important for building interpretations of the world. For example, as
Patricia Hill Collins writes, “Denied access to the podium, Black women have been unable to spend time theorizing about alternative conceptualizations of community. Instead, through daily actions African-American have created alternative communities that empower” (Hill Collins 1991, 223). Rejecting a demarcation of politics into governmental processes and engagement, a focus on practices reveals a politics of resistance and the agency of social beings within their everyday lives.

Critical Positionality is a mode of understanding that requires resistance for it to emerge; once cultivated, however, critical positionality clarifies relations of power. Nancy Hartsock writes, “the vision available to the oppressed group must be struggled for and represents an achievement which requires both science to see beneath the surface of the social relations in which all are forced to participate, and the education which can only grow from struggle to change those relations” (Hartsock 1987, 285). Just as positionality involves a re-thinking of the relations between self and other, and the materiality of identity, subjectivity, and difference, it requires that we position ourselves critically in relation to knowledge production and the hegemonic ways of knowing which elide the complex processes where by we, you, and I are produced. As subjects critically orient themselves towards knowledge, knowledge reveals itself as situated, deeply intertwined with one’s social location.8

Because critical positionality emerges in and through resistance and struggle, when actively adopted and cultivated, it creates a counter-narrative to the forms of essentialism that characterize neoliberalism. It becomes a political strategy that can be

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8 Such is the contention of standpoint theory, and the knowledge of systems produced in and through one’s selective exclusion and inclusion into spaces and logics of power (Hartsock 1987, 284). Noting that privilege produces certain blind-spots in one’s experience and analysis of the world, making such visions “both partial and perverse,” critical positionality necessarily requires the carving out of spaces for subordinate knowledge and practices to emerge and develop” (Hartsock 1987, 285). This is not to suggest that “the positionings of the subjugated are not exempt from critical reexamination, decoding, deconstruction, and interpretation,” but rather they offer new grounds for understanding the politics of resistance that characterize contemporary social movements and the possibilities for a transformative practice in the here and now (Haraway 1988). It suggests that the kind of policy work, activism, empowerment, and modes of engaging the system that emerge in spaces of subjugation proceed according to an alternative logic and that by placing new subjects at the center of analysis, particularly when such subjects are understood as intersectionally constituted and capable of negotiating the practices through which their social self-understandings come into being, creates the opportunity for asking new questions and challenging the narratives that underpin the status quo.
liberatory (Hartsock 1983, 285)⁹ opening a space for theorizing a politics of possibility. While “essentialist views of … identity have served to mask complex forms of oppression and disable strategies for resistance,” critical positionality allows for the revelation and cultivation of spaces and subjects of resistance (Gregory 1998, 12). These are subjects that, by destabilizing their own sense of self, are open to the possibility that the other, even if a subject of power and/or privilege, can also be de-stabilized and that solidarities across power and difference can emerge. It is from this space of negotiation and possibility that a theorizing of food justice “work” and political action begins. Critical positionality thus not only “offers a more adequate, richer, better account of the world,” but encourages a “critical, reflexive relation to our own as well as others’ practices of domination and the unequal parts of privilege and oppression that make up all positions” (Haraway 1988, 579). It creates conditions for discussing what a ethic of resistance looks like, what positional responsibilities we have, and who/what we are accountable to and accountable for.

Critical Positionality thus posits that we are not only a process, a transformation over time, but that we have agency in this process – that we can direct our modes of becoming in uncomfortable directions, in order to cultivate alternative ethical and political imaginations which might not be best suited for our times but will help nurture the emergence of new futures in the here and now. The possibility of forming new communities and new collective identities, as explored in chapter 3, is possible only insofar as struggle can produce new becomings: “Social identities and community based solidarities are not given “ready made” to politics; rather they are formed and reformed through struggles in which the “winning of identification,” the articulations of collective needs, interests, and commitments is itself a key stake in the exercise of domination and resistance” (Gregory 1998, 18). In summary, critical positionality, as it is practiced in the context of the food justice movement, suggests that we are all empowered as “theorizing, authorizing subjects” and that as such we can participate in the formation of new worlds, new communities, new political institutions, new economies (Gibson-Graham 2006a).

⁹ Hartsock writes, “As an engaged vision, the understanding of the oppressed, the adoption of a standpoint exposes the real relations among human beings as inhuman, points beyond the present, and carries a historically liberatory role” (Hartsock 1987, 285).
These new subjectivities, and their political, social and economic practices, are necessary for the cultivation of a post-neoliberal present, a way of living in harmony with the earth that gives all beings a chance for life.

**Critical Positionality and Cultivating Alternative Political Imaginaries**

Critical Positionality, as a theory of political practice, requires that we also think about how to extend hybridity and instability to our analysis of larger power structures and relations. In other words, we cannot think simply about how critical theory changes relationships between subjects and within organizations, but also how the transformation of micropolitical relations involves new orientations towards the meta and macro social, economic, and political structures shaping everyday lives. As black feminists have long argued, both the changed consciousness of individuals and the social transformation of political and economic institutions are essential ingredients for social change (Hill Collins 1991, 221). We must therefore think not only about critically positional subjects, but what larger relations emerge when we form intentionally critical communities rooted in difference.

I use the concept of the imaginary to think about the ways in which movements, as a collection of organizations and individuals, frame and orient themselves and their actions in relation to larger structures and ideologies of power. The imaginary too allows us to think more deeply about the constitutive processes of forming the *polis*, as an “imagined community” of social-political stakeholders. Charles Taylor, in his book *Modern Social Imaginaries*, writes:

By social imaginary, I mean something much broader and deeper than the intellectual schemes people may entertain when they think about social reality in a disengaged mode. I am thinking, rather, of the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations… The social imaginary is that common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy (C. Taylor 2004, 23–24).

Imaginaries inform and produce social actors and social identities at the same time as these social actors shape and negotiate their social imaginaries; they exist in a dynamic and “mutually productive relationship” with one another; the social imaginary can thus
either be “reproductive [and] transformative of their social identities and relatedly their powers, interests and practices” (Muppidi 2004, 24), insofar as the power relations that underpin them are both expansive and incomplete.

The concept of the political imaginary allows us to understand the ways in which life experience, history, and identity translate into perceptions of political possibility and the ways in which different social group organize to effect social change.\textsuperscript{10} Indeed it is often a movement’s relationship to these structures, rather than the constitutive relations among participants, that a social movement is defined. This relationship to the status quo, and the process whereby change is imagined and enacted, can distinguish competing and parallel social movements from one another.\textsuperscript{11}

As social movements and organizations direct political efficacy, they necessarily map of institutions of power, navigating spaces and structures of discipline, and locating potential areas for manipulation. The political imaginary is specifically how social actors differently map power, strategize for change, define legitimacy, and locate/empower political agency. Mapping occurs multi-sensorially. It is not just a cognitive enterprise.

\textsuperscript{10} Within Social Movements literature, ‘social location’ is used to conceptualize how ‘positionality’ impacts the political actions, orientations, and choices of difference activist groups. Understood structuring access to resources, social location explains differences in the strategies and actions of individuals working to effect change; Dorceta Taylor writes, “Social locations affects how people construct the meanings that define grievances, opportunities, and collective identities. In addition, social location helps to determine the type and amount of resources available for movement activities. There is also a link between social location and knowledge of collective action tactics and strategies. In addition, the ability to mobilize or use resources effectively is also dependent on the activist’s social location. (Taylor 2000, 509). Dorceta Taylor conceptualized the relationship between social location and the articulation and critique of social and political problems as process of framing. She writes:

Framing refers to the process by which individuals and groups identify, interpret, and express social and political grievances. A central feature of the framing process is the generalization of diagnostic attributions, that is, the identification of problems and the imputation of blame or causality. Framing can also be viewed as a scheme of interpretations that guides the way in which ideological meanings and beliefs are packaged by movement activist and presented to would be supporters” (Taylor, 2000, 511).

Because this dissertation emerges at the interface between actual community based organization and the academic discourses about power, politics, identity, and social change, it requires a reconciliation of vocabularies and frameworks for thinking about what is happening, on the ground, what the problems are, what should happen, and what we are all working towards. The terminology of Taylor’s analysis, both “location” and “frame” imply a fixing of identity and action which denies a politics and practice of contingency, agency and negotiation that the concepts of ‘positionality’ and ‘imaginary’ allow us to retain. Insofar as cultivating possibility and efficacy are at the heart of this work, I accept the insights of this literature without inheriting its rigid language.

\textsuperscript{11} The most common example of this is when scholars juxtapose Martin Luther King and Malcom X; in the case of contemporary alternative agrifood movements, you see this in the emergence calls for food sovereignty and food justice as a response to the calls for local food or food security.
Rather, subjects navigate the world emotionally and sensorially – they eyes, the ears, the hand and the mouth all position subjects as inside and outside. Using the concept of the political imaginary allows us to imbue the subject with agency, and that agency is expressed through a mapping of power – in its institutional, structural, and subjective formations, and the space between, the “wiggle room,” the “room to act up,” to maneuver, to take advantage, to effect change (Sommer 2006).

At the fringes of different political imaginaries are political actions which are interpreted by ‘others’ as illegitimate, co-opted, conformist, senseless, and counter-productive. Indeed this mapping, valuing, and legitimizing of political practices and the strategies which guide them is always already bound to one’s positionality. As Dorceta Taylor writes,

Social locations endow them with access to different kinds and amounts of resources; the availability of resources influences the strategies used and the kind of movements that activists build. Consequently, mainstream environmentalists who might count lawmakers among their personal, political, or professional networks are more likely to use lobbying as an activists strategy, where as environmental justice activist, with much less access to Congress and other powerful political bodies in the country, are more likely to use direct action strategies such as protests and rallies are part of their campaigns (D. E. Taylor 2000, 510).

The availability of and access to resources plays a key role in the materialization of power, driving political behavior and how social movement participants enact or struggle to effect change. As political actors engage and resist power, their relationship with dominant institutions and ideologies informs their political practices and their analysis of both what they are competing against, and, more importantly in the context of this analysis, how they understand other actors, potential collaborators and allies. In order to better understand the relationship between political actions, power relations, perceptions of political possibility, I use Michel de Certeau’s concepts of strategies and tactics. The distinction between these genres of political action help us appreciate the differences of political practices within and across social movements, particularly as those practices seek to engage, change, and/or transform hegemonic relations of power. Further, it helps to differentiate the political imaginaries of social movements that are organizing
alongside one another and ostensibly for the same or related reasons. Michel de Certeau defines strategies as:

The calculation or manipulation of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated. It postulates a place that can be delimited as its own and serves as the base from which relations with an exteriority composed of targets or threats (customers or competitors, enemies, the country surrounding the city, objectives and objects of research, etc.) can be managed … A Cartesian attitude, if you wish: it is an effort to delimit one’s own place in a world bewitched by the invisible powers of the other. It is also the typical attitude of modern science, politics and military strategy (de Certeau 1984, 35).

Strategies provide a clear path of action, and an empowered space of political participation, identifying and engaging relevant political actors and actions. Strategies emerge when one perceives themselves to ‘make sense’ as a subject within the dominant institutions and narratives of political change. Within the contemporary alternative food movement, strategic political action is often directed at the government, through government channels. They are deployed by willful subjects of power (citizens) who seek to “generate” or alter existing relationships with a distinct exterior (government or law). According to this definition liberal politics are comprised primarily of strategies. By conforming to hegemonic norms of political action strategies are thus, by design, reform oriented. As a result, the political imaginary which privileges strategic political action suggests that one can have access to institutions of power, although this access might be tenuous and require negotiation of one’s positionality; its also suggests that that they can perform an adept navigation the specialized pathways of contemporary, technocratic politics. The positionality of the strategic political subject is one of power and privilege.

De Certeau juxtaposes strategies with “tactics,” what he defines as the “art of the weak” (de Certeau 1984, 36). Tactics are all those political actions and behaviors not privileged and legitimized within the modern political frame; they “belong to the other… A tactic insinuates itself into the other’s place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety… whatever it wins, it does not keep. It must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into opportunities” (de Certeau 1984, xix). Strategies rely upon a vision of change that is ‘overtaking’ – one that seeks to replace and supplant power, possibly leaving those structures in place. Although the tactical political
imaginary does not locate empowerment within the spaces of representative/liberal democracy, de Certeau’s analysis of the politics of resistance allows us to consider the ways in which policy and the privileged pathways of liberal activism, can still be tactically engaged.

De Certeau’s language of strategies and tactics is useful in conceptualizing the different modes or comportments of subjects as they relate to, (or understand themselves in relations to) power. Strategies, as political actions which work within the system, call upon, or hail, the elements one’s positionality that “make sense” or are “intelligible” within the system. Conversely, tactics are a mode of engagement that calls upon one’s “outsiderness,” one’s “otherness.” Depending upon the nature of the institution being engaged, and the mapping that the subject does in relations to that institution, either strategies or tactics can be effective.

If the assumption is that subjugated knowledges require new forms of articulation and new location for enunciation, then tactics are those political actions developed in the context of domination that also must seek out and develop new techniques for articulation and alternative locations for engagement (Hill Collins 1991, 236). This making or awakening of the political often calls upon alternate epistemologies and cosmologies, situated knowledge that those in power might not sense, know, or understand. Critical positionality is an attempt to re-direct one’s trajectory, to remap one’s relationship to the other, and to remap one’s relationship to institutions of power. It can involve a “taking advantage of” one’s privileged position, the ways that one might blend or pass into a space of power with subversive intentions, challenging the foundations of the privilege which granted them access in the first place. Underneath the theory of politics that differentiates between strategies and tactics, is a belief that subversive agency is possible for both the powerful and the powerless. To enter into the house of power, armed with the masters tools, with the attempt to challenge and dismantle what is there, demonstrates the ways in which one’s positionality is negotiated. The process whereby one realizes that they have agency, that they can effect change either in the spaces of power or somewhere in the in-between, the moment when a subject or a community feels empowered to reform, transform and or create autonomous zones, is integral to the shaping and making of political beings.
Social movements, organized in opposition to the status quo, and in the case of alternative agrifood movements, to the industrial food system, differently deploy theories of political change. These theories, understood as their political imaginaries, are embedded within their strategies and tactics, the actions they take to effect change. Because the food justice critique of the status quo (the industrial food system and society more generally) sees the denial of difference/power/privilege as creating the problems that individuals should/are fighting against, it creates an unstable ground for organization work and coalition building which is never fixed, never stable, and always needs tending to. It also integrates means and ends, rejecting the notion that a just food system can exist without a just process that involves dismantling privilege and empowering actors as these power relations manifest in oppositional organizing practices. As discussed at length in chapter 2, this is in contrast to parallel alternative food movements. This dissertation weaves together critical positionality with the concept political imaginary (and the strategies and tactics therein) to understand how food justice organizations uniquely effect change and transform their communities, their economies, and their politics. By destabilizing the ontological and epistemological grounds upon which political subjectivities are built, while at the same time attending to the material lives and needs of human beings, food justice organizations are practicing a new politics of resistance to neoliberal globalization. Through both direct confrontation and the creation of co-present alternatives, this dissertation argues that the critical positionality of food justice organizations undergirds the emergence of new communities, new economies, and a new politics for a post-neoliberal present.

Research Process

The first phase of data collection (November 2010-November 2011) primarily involved my participation in the larger forums and venues of food justice activism. I participated in online forums and attended national and regional conferences, which involved workshops, site visits, and informal interviews with organizational leadership and participants. It was during this time that I began to understand the significance of identifying and dismantling privilege in every layer of food justice work, a task that required that I re-position myself towards my research. Although I was also in the
process of forming the Hawaiʻi Food Policy Council at this time, I was also familiarizing myself with the discourses that framed and oriented food justice work.

The second phase of data collection (November 2011 – May 2012) involved much more in depth processes of participation and observation. It was during this time that I began taking the lessons and insights I from my more informal participation in the macro-venues of food justice work and applying them in my own organizational work and development. It was during this time that I started to identify and organize the practices that I observed into the thematic genres of community, economics, and politics. While the actions of food justice organizations certainly vary broadly according to organizational location and historical context, there were clear layers of engagement around which the movement, as a whole, was organizing. Taken separately, the movement was still making concrete contributions to the everyday lives and consciousness of their communities; taken together, I began to see a way of theorizing resistance to neoliberalism through food justice work.

The third phase of data collection involved identify key organizations and leaders and seeking out opportunities for more in-depth and formal interviews (August 2012 – present). In some cases, I now had years of experience working with and among these organizations and individuals. These interviews provided the opportunity to do two things: 1) get feedback on and co-develop a theory of food justice activism; and 2) practice participatory theory-building. The purpose was to reveal and reflect – and to capture these processes of thought, insight, analysis in their own words. To the extent that this dissertation is charged with the task of furthering the field of political science, I purposely kept the voices of my interviewees in the text as much as possible. This is because I understand my own limited capacity for interpretation and translation, and that by building out the archive of voices and texts from contemporary resistance movements, there will remain, in perpetuity, sites for students and researcher to re-explore and re-interpret. I avoid the claim, whenever possible, that I can “see” from the positions of

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12 My decision to reproduce large segments of my interviews also reflects the profound impact Tom Mertes collection, *A Movement of Movements* had on my graduate trajectory (2004). What struck me about Mertes’ work is the way in which his interviewee’s we able to capture and articulate nuanced critiques of globalization as they were revealed through an active engagement with the system as it was re-shaping their social, cultural, and material conditions. Theory, for me, was moved out of the ivory tower of philosophy and onto the ground.
my subjects, although moments of solidarity in facing the shared challenges food justice work were common during the interview process, particularly when discussing the challenges of running a social enterprise and managing a large team, including staff and volunteers. This “work” of the dissertation, in conjunction with the work of food justice, was to understand the opportunities these interviews provided, to decode, to deconstruct, to interpret, and to build new ways of thinking and understanding just what food justice work is doing and can do.

**Case Studies**

**Māhuahua ‘Ai o Hoi// Kāko’o ‘Ōiwi**

In early 2011, I began working with Professor Hokulani Aikau on securing funding for my dissertation. Together, in conjunction with Professors Florence Thomas and Henrietta Dulaiova, we submitted and were granted funding from the Sea Grant to study the management strategies of Kāko’o ‘Ōiwi as they restore Māhuahua ‘Ai o Hoi from fallow land that was most recently used as a cattle ranch and dump site, to 200 acres of productive lo‘i.

Māhuahua ‘Ai o Hoi means to increase food (‘ai can also refer to poi) production in Hoi, Hoi being the ili (smaller land parcel in an ahupua‘a) where the first lo‘i was restored in 2009. As you can see from the name of the project, it has always been about not just the ecosystem, but the people and cultures that have historically managed and lived from that eco-system. The vision for the project captures their intention to marry people, place, and restoration:

He‘eia is an abundant food-producing land: forests, lo‘i kalo, organic farms, fishponds, and the ocean extend as far as the eye can see. Agricultural production serves to educate, feed, and sustain the community. Families gather for
celebration, learning, and healing. Traditional and modern arts and sciences strengthen the He‘eia community. Hoi is restored as a native wetland. Koloa, ‘alae ‘ula, and ae‘o have returned and the splashing of ‘ama‘ama sounds like rain falling on He‘eia Stream. Clean, clear water feeds the fishpond and native limu and other marine life are once again abundant (“Māhuahua ‘Ai o Hoi” 2013).

![Image](image.jpg)

Picture 2: Māhuahua ‘Ai o Hoi. Photo Credit: Michael Thessel 2013

The opportunity to receive funding for my work with a food justice organization funded relied, in part, on my privilege as a white, middle class academic. It made use of my mastery of the ‘politics’ of academia and my wiliness and ability to seek out funding. It was not lost on me, as I witnessed the organization shed several staff when funding was tight, that my own “job security” in this context was precisely the kind of power dynamic food justice work was highlighting and attempting to destabilize. Additionally, my whiteness as a researcher in the context of a food sovereignty organization committed to cultural restoration for the Native Hawaiian community drove an anxious attunement to how I was present and participating at the space, with volunteers, and with the organizational staff and leadership.

My year of work with Māhuahua involved a process of extensive interviews with the organization’s staff and leadership; monthly community workdays when we worked side by side with community members and volunteers, and the design and execution of a community workday volunteer survey. Through this survey we examined the role
Hawaiian knowledge played in the participants’ valuation of the community workday and the project’s work more generally. Additionally, as a researcher within the ahupua‘a of He‘eia I was given the opportunity to participate in the initial planning stages of the NOAA Sentinel Site designation, which was actively pursued by the Executive Director of Kāko‘o ‘Ōiwi, Koa Shultz, in conjunction with the Nature Conservancy and NOAA.

Food Justice Projects

Originally distinct within my thinking, exposure to the work of food justice and food sovereignty organizations quickly revealed that, on the ground, movements are profoundly intertwined, almost to the point of inextricability. While the discourse of food sovereignty has more traction in a context like Hawai‘i, with its active, ‘āina-based movement to resist settler colonialism (and its characteristic forms of food and agriculture), food sovereignty organizations consistently borrowed strategies from food justice organizations and understood them as partners in a larger movement to create alternatives to industrial food, particularly for communities who were never included in the idealized version of this food system. Consequently, rather than thinking about food justice and food sovereignty as distinct, I began to think about them together. I spent a total of ten weeks over two years travelling the United States learning about, visiting, and interviewing various food justice organizations and volunteers. Given the variety of

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13 This realization began as I was embarking on my first dissertation fieldwork trip, where I attended a 3-day workshop, “Building Community from the Ground Up,” at Growing Power in Milwaukee, WI. Growing Power is one of the premiere food justice organization in continental US. After posting these plans to my personal Facebook page, MA‘O Farms, one of the premiere food sovereignty organizations in Hawai‘i contacted me, asking that I deliver a gift to Will Allen:
relationships that led me to the programs, some personal, some professional, some purely out of scholarly interest, there was no consistent data gathering technique. My privilege as an academic did not always work in my favor, as a reached out to organizations for interviews and information.

Voices from five food justice organizations stand out in this dissertation: Growing Power, The Social Justice Learning Institute, Why Hunger, MA‘O Farms, and People’s Grocery. In conjunction with my in depth participatory research with Kāko‘o ‘Ōiwi and the Hawai‘i Food Policy Council, interviews and additional on-site research with these organizations served as an opportunity to have actual participants articulate, in their own words, the impact they both strove for and saw their organizations having in their communities.

Table 1-1: Food Justice Organizations Interviewed and Visited. In this table I list the primary organizations I visited as well as the primary method of engagement and data collection. Some of the conferences involved meeting with and discussing the work of other food justice organizations. I have listed the conferences, however, the organizations discussed were too numerous to list here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Method of Engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Growing Power</td>
<td>Milwaukee, WI</td>
<td>Attended three-day work shop: <em>Growing Community from the Ground Up</em>. Conducted several formal and informal interviews with participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing Food and Justice</td>
<td>Milwaukee, WI</td>
<td>Attended one-day Dismantling Racism Workshop. Conducted several formal and informal interviews with participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA‘O Farms</td>
<td>Waianae, Oahu, HI</td>
<td>Longtime volunteer; Interviewed Farm Managing Director Gary Maunakea-Forth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why Hunger</td>
<td></td>
<td>Interview with Community Engagement Director, Lorrie Clevenger; Lorri and I also attended the workshops at Growing Power together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Food Security</td>
<td>Portland, OR</td>
<td>Attended three-day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Coalition (CFSC) – Food Policy Conference | conference focusing on Policy and the food system. Conducted several formal and informal interviews with participants.

Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC) – Annual Conference | Oakland, CA | Attended three-day conference with a focus on food justice. Conducted several formal and informal interviews with participants.

Social Justice Learning Institute | Inglewood, CA | Interview with Civic Engagement Director, Derek Steel; tour of program gardens

East New York Farms | East New York, NY | Interview with Community Garden Educator Deborah Greig; Deborah and I also went to college together.

Los Angeles Food Policy Council // Good Food LA | Los Angeles, CA | Interview with Senior Policy Advisor to the mayor, Paula Daniels.

People’s Grocery | Oakland, CA | Visited project sites; participated in Webinar with Executive Director Nikki Henderson.

Austin Sustainable Food Center // Happy Kitchen | Austin, TX | Interview with Joy Casnovsky, The Happy Kitchen Program Director

Mandela Marketplace // Mandela Food Cooperative | Oakland, CA | Attended workshop during 3 day CFSC annual conference. Conducted several formal and informal interviews with participants.

South Central Farmers | South Central Los Angeles, CA | Interviewed long-time volunteer and board member, Rosa Romero

Urban Environment Policy Institute | Eagle Rock, CA | Interviewed Rosa Romero Farm to Preschool Program Manager

Feed the Hunger | HI, CA | Interviewed Denise Albano, President and Founder

**Hawai‘i Food Policy Council**

Hawai‘i, perhaps more than other communities I have organized in, demands that one locate his/herself within the various cartographies that organize local politics. In
Hawai‘i, you are not just what you are doing and where you are going – you are also where you are from. I am not from Hawai‘i and in Hawai‘i – this matters. Not only am I not from Hawai‘i, I am also a haole…an aggressive, outspoken, academic, and female Haole. We are all deeply situated – but in a movement of movements organizing around issues of land, water, food, and natural resources – I am firmly situated outside of the local norm.

Through my work with the HFPC, I have had to consider the importance of capacity building, planning, structural design, community engagement, and fundraising. Anyone who has participated in the formation of a community-based organization knows that the work never ends. Beyond the work of the organization that directly serves the community, grassroots and non-governmental organizations, particularly those in their foundational stages, require in-depth internal work and reflection. In practice, NGOs call this work “process oriented capacity building,” as it requires participants to think not just about what work the organization is going to do, but perhaps the more important question of how that work is going to get done, and the relationship that this externally oriented process has with the internal work of group leaders. Process work not only takes time but it often zaps energy and passion because it immediately serves no one but the organization itself.

Even as we enter the Spring of 2013, The Hawai‘i Food Policy Council is still in the throws of deep internal reflection about what the appropriate process is for community-based advocacy work, particularly given the structures of settler colonialism which have profoundly shaped the relationship of ‘the community,’ comprised of native Hawaiians, immigrants, settlers, and tourists, to the state. We, like many of the organizations interviewed and researched for the dissertation, have constantly had to attend to the hybridity of our community of stakeholders, remain attuned to their differences, and how these differences underpin relationships to one another, to “capital,” the “market,” and to the state.

However, my increasing attunement to the importance of positionality in organizational strategies of food justice work shifted the direction of my dissertation and the direction and orientation of the Hawai‘i Food Policy Council. Rather than obsessing over how to ‘get the Council going,’ I started to understand how process-oriented
capacity building is the means through which food justice organizations take on the hard work of getting participants to think critically about their own positionality. The result of this work within the HFPC resulted in the design of our organizational structure and a clear articulation of what our role in Hawaii’s food movement would be.

As I explore at length in Chapter 5, I have always understood food policy councils to have twin missions in the context of the food justice movement. They seek to democratize the food system, from ground to garbage. This means addressing the key features of access – both the food we eat, the land upon which this food grows, the knowledge to grow it, and the ability to make a decent living while doing so. However integral to its mission to democratize the food system is the ways in which it seeks to democratize the policy process: to engage the community and food system stakeholders into the governance of our resources. Both of these missions are monumental in their own right. Combining them, particularly as you contend with the legacies of settler colonialism that have alienated many communities in Hawai‘i from government, food, and land required much greater time than I originally could have ever imagined.
I cannot say if what we have designed after this journey of critical thinking and capacity building, will fulfill this twin mission but I do think that we have created a structure which is worthy of testing, as it integrates community input, active community involvement in knowledge production, community accountability, leveraging food system expertise, networking food system experts across silos, and the administrative burdens of running a non-governmental organization. The HFPC has absorbed many of the insights I have learned throughout this dissertation process, as we fail forward towards success.

**Baby Awearness**

Although it is not a food justice organization, my experiences owning and developing Baby Awearness provided much of the experimental inspiration for the New
Economies chapter. Having actually owned a small business, with all the guts and glory that such an endeavor produces, proved invaluable as for interpreting and theorizing the economic practices of food justice work. Understanding what “going beyond the bottom-line” looks like, in practice, helped me to value the small, intra-organizational decisions that food justice organization were making as they sought to develop revenue generation and the financial sustainability. Without the modes of attunement and respect that came out of running a social enterprise myself, I would have most likely ignored the value of decisions like bringing staff to budget planning meetings. My role as a mother, a business owner, a PhD student/teacher/researcher, and as a volunteer made the question of time and payment of extreme importance to me throughout this process. Evaluating not just the environmental but the social and economic sustainability of projects, and the skills necessary to render organizations viable in the long-term, very much influenced my selection of case-studies and my particular emphasis on social-entrepreneurialism and the projection of non-capitalist spaces, projects, and enterprises. My knowledge of small business literature also functioned in the forms of categorization through which I was able to group and differently understand the roles and functions of various social actors within community organizations.

Counter-Hegemonic Methodologies

“Theory extension should be a process without end. It should consecrate rather than obscure rebellious reality” (Burawoy 1998, 16).

Critical positionality oriented my own relationship to the movement, both as a participant and a scholar, forcing me to “become answerable” to what I have learned [not] to see (Haraway 1988, 583). My whiteness, my gender, my community of origin, and my education all deeply influenced my relationships to the many places where I worked, and the people with whom I researched. Overtime, it became increasingly clear that my research process, the how of my project, should reflect the political commitments of the who (subjects) and the what (subject-matter), and my ever changing positional relationship therein. Further, the larger genres explored by this dissertation, food and resistance, demanded the development of a methodological process that could contend
with objective empirical conditions, while at the same time situating them within theoretically nuanced conceptualizations of power and possibility. As such, this dissertation relied upon critical ethnography, a reflexive approach to research, participant observation, and discourse analysis for its methodology. When using positive methods such as surveys, interviews, etc., I do so reflexively, seeing the positivist and interpretive methods as interdependent and most productive when held in tension.

As a primary tool in critical ethnographic research, participant observation is a method of research and data collection that involves in-depth relationship building with the subjects and sites that one is researching. It involves enmeshing oneself into the processes of social life, through “activities such as “learning a local language or dialect, participating in the daily life of community through ordinary conversations and interaction, observing events (meetings, ceremonies, rituals, elections, protests, examining gossip, jokes, and other informal speech acts for their underlying assumptions, recording data in field notes” (Wedeen 2009, 86). Immersion into research projects, sites, and relations conditions the possibility for new forms of thinking and knowing about the internal power structures and personalities that mark an organization, drive its work, and influence its success on projects and problems; “Rather than detracting from what the field worker can learn, first-hand relations with those studied may provide useful clues to understanding the more subtle, implicit underlying assumptions that are often not readily accessible through observation and interview methods alone” (Emerson 1995, 3).

Revealing the ongoing and fluid processes that constitute everyday life and power, participant observation expresses a researcher’s fidelity to the destabilized ontologies and situated/contingent epistemologies. When informed by an ethic of responsibility, it can create conditions for a responsible, respectful, and reflexive research process that connects “participant and observer, situation and knowledge, life-world and system, ideology and theory” (Burawoy 1998, 14). As both a “sensibility” and an “activity” critical to any theory of politics, ethnography and participant observation allow researchers to “gain insight into actors’ lived political experiences, to observe how people make sense of their works, to chart how they ground their everyday practices and administrative routines, and to analyze the gap between the idealized representation and
actual apprehension of events, people and political orders” (Wedeen 2009, 85). Fieldwork and long-term participant observation created conditions within which I was able to not only “see” the making of meaning, but also its ruptures, inconsistencies, and ambiguities. The driving motivation behind such a methodological approach is that over time and given an increasingly familiarity the researcher has with the subject, the more able this researcher will be able to bear witness to the truths of life-worlds they may not understand as their own, observing the processes whereby truth coheres and also unfolds. A reflexive approach to participant observation also challenges the notion, however, that such a truth can ever be revealed.

Because critical ethnographic methodologies challenge the notion that research can and should be reduced to a set of procedures (Burawoy 1998), and that these procedures make ‘objective’ knowledge production possible, the procedures used to develop the argument of this dissertation are as varied and complex as the case studies, and the organizations and lifeworlds these case studies explore. My process of participant observation varied widely across the broad spectrum of organizations whose work informed and inspired this dissertation. Ranging from in-depth, regular site visits and interviews with the entire organizational staff, to day trips and phone interviews, the methodological inconsistency served as a reminder that comparative analysis often relies upon the humanist assumptions of modern empiricism.

While three years of active participant observation laid the foundation for the selection of the primary case studies in this dissertation; opportunity and social connections account for the rest. Ultimately, I was interested in identifying and theorizing the ‘best practices’ of food justice organizations, particularly when those practices were developed in response to questions of identity, difference, power, and privilege. To say that I am both participant in and observer of my research belies the deep passion driving the work. I write not just to explain, reflect, argue, and conclude but to move with my community, closer to a ‘beloved’ beyond. The organizations I have interviewed and surveyed, and the theories their work has informed do not just contribute to the task of my degree; in their own way, they have provided valuable resources, both materially and discursively, to my immediate lived environment. Like the critical agents that I met, interviewed, and forged relationships with throughout this dissertation journey, I
tactically deployed my own complex identifications as I sought out opportunities for research and interviews. Sometimes I was a small business owner, sometimes I was a PhD candidate, and other times an I was an activist. The differential value of these identities depending on the context of encounter was not inconsequential; rather it speaks to the destabilization of knowledge and social values at the heart of food justice work that this dissertation explores at length.

In the case of my work at Māhuahua ‘Ai o Hoi, I consistently participated in the organization’s monthly community workday for over a year. While I was able to see the linear progression of the space, its development into a successful non-profit with an accompanying narrative to frame the project and its trajectory, I was also attuned to the inconsistencies of this narrative among individual staff members and board members, as well as the unexpected problems and surprises that changed the course of the organization’s development and forced them to adapt to new social, economic, and interpersonal dynamics. These adaptations and changes were as important to understanding the organization as their success in developing according to the organization’s mission and strategic plan insofar as they reveal the ‘logics,’ ‘values’ and ways of worlding that guide communities and govern decision-making. Similarly, I remained tuned into the evolution of food justice narratives as they were debated across social media, list-serves, public meetings and in private email exchanges. I used interview opportunities and site visits, as well as my personal work with the Hawai‘i Food Policy Council and Baby Awareness, as opportunities to question whether these debates were “making sense” on the ground.

Particularly in the context of a research project that explores the boundaries and values of an imaginary, it was absolutely critical that I experience some of the choices and challenges that food justice organizations were making and facing first hand. While these groups are not necessarily making the same choices, even when faced with the same challenges, over time key themes emerged within the responses to common structurally-rooted challenges, and my experience not only helped me to see these responses but also their significance. As Wedeen writes, “the ethnographer is positioned both to register the categories a community uses (its “categories of practice”) and to enjoy the distance necessary to develop relevant analytical categories” (Wedeen 2009,
For example, I distinguish three spheres of engagement in order to structure this dissertation: community, economy, and politics. Although these spheres are overlapping, it was useful to separate them in order to demonstrate how critical positionality worked in these contexts, and the kinds of strategies and tactics food justice organizations developed to both resist the industrial food system and develop resilient, autonomous communities.

My research and writing processes sought to explicitly challenge the theory/practice binary by ‘seeing’ theory in the practices of individuals and organizations and by cultivating the art of actively practicing theory – both in myself and in the organizations I researched and participated in. Immersion shifts the tasks of the ethnographer from observing and theorizing “meaningful” events, those which the political scientist might demarcate as the political, to the banality of the “everyday.” My use of ethnography, as “sensibility” and an “activity” critical to a theory of politics, locates the “subject-matter” of politics in the processes of everyday life, in communities, in attitudes, in practices, in identities, and in the meanings and values assigned to them.14 Suddenly eating or growing food are acts of resistance, not simply survival. I read the practices of food justice organizations as texts pregnant with multiple meanings. By both observing and participating in these practice and speech acts, I had the opportunity to critically engage them at multiple levels, observing and experiencing power, resistance, and the tension between the two.15

This interpretivist form of ethnographic research emerges from the space between positivism and constructivism. Participation challenges the work of social scientists interested in making technocratic, universalizing claims. It also asks that the theorist not abandon the power and material importance of the empirical realm. Discourse analysis, as part of my toolkit as a participant observer, allowed me to explore the tension between

14 Lisa Wedeen writes, “For ethnography as sensibility and activity implies the possibilities and pleasure of serendipitous encounter, the commitments to long-term engagement with places and inhabitants, and an abiding attention to what people say and do – as well as an appreciation crucial to politics, that what people say is a form of doing in its own right” (Wedeen 2009, 90).

15 Motherhood was for me that ultimate opportunity for participant observation and critical engagement with the everyday performative acts of sex and gender. On the one hand, I experienced the structural lived processes of power as it shaped myself, my body, and my relationship to my child (breastfeeding in a capitalist context being the most profound). And yet my “work” as a scholar and critical observer helped me to also observe, value, and gradually seek to multiply the opportunities for empowerment in a context that is otherwise terribly disempowering.
structures of power, the lived and material impacts of power structures, and the ways in which life nevertheless can escape power. Guided by the Marxian adage, “Philosophers have only interpreted the world. The point, however, is to change it” (Marx 2000), fieldwork, as a compliment to the traditional exploration of discourse and textual production, is both an extension of my training as critical theorist, and a challenge to the supposition that we can write about a politics of resistance without participating in practical organizing and the construction of alternatives to the status quo.16

The contingencies of truth, and the “wiggle room” agents exploit in the face of power, are also important to consider as we make claims about these structures in the process of analysis. Burawoy writes:

Objectification is punctured when the same macroforces promote very real microprocesses or when these in turn congeal into social movements that challenge any external determination. However necessary to the method, objectification endows forces with a power they do not necessarily possess (Burawoy 1998, 16).

As we make claims, we make meaning – and yet – we also must confuse and confound – by letting confusion appear, when necessary, in our work. Indeed, Burawoy reminds us, particularly in the context of theorizing resistance, that contingency and unpredictability complicate our task, and we must develop methodological choices which do not endow structures of power with more than they deserve. Such is the driving impulse of this work, to develop a language that can capture all that is possible when the complete hegemony of capitalism and liberalism are cast in doubt.

The task of any text that seeks to avoid objectification and essentialism is to produce knowledge that understands its own situatedness and to adopt methodologies that are suited to ourselves and our subjects. Such a project is an imperfect and cautious one, but an important one nevertheless. 17 Acknowledging the limitations of any research

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16 Situated, as I am, in a department rooted in critical theory and the rejection of an empirically obsessed political science, this defense of the empirical in the process of theory is a result of my own position within my own discipline. As Lisa Wedeen writes, “Interpretivist ethnographies allow us to see how often antipositivist epistememe need not lead to the abandonment of empiricism” (2009, 85).

17 Imperfection and insecurity are certainly decidedly anti-modern aspirations, and yet they inspire an alternative epistemological, political, and ethical orientation. I first encountered this idea of striving for insecurity in knowledge when I read Michael Dillon’s A Politics of Security, where he uses Martin Heidigger’s ontologies to deconstruct the totalizing impulses of contemporary political science. Dillon writes, “And yet, we are nevertheless free before we are secured. This book therefore concentrates on exploring the character of that freedom…Use of Heidegger should, therefore, come equipped with a
project, and the extent to which any intellectual production is objectifying, silencing voices, constituting and normalizing subjects, reducing and controlling contexts and their effects, and compressing hybridity into a different analytical frames, including those produced through ethnographic analysis, our task is to work at that limit of intelligibility and attempt to minimize objectification throughout our work process. As Burawoy writes, “This call is not to abandon science for a babel of voices but to listen for challenges to the analysis of process, for opportunities for reconstruction” (1998, 15). In the case of the industrial food system and food justice work, the forces of racism, capitalism, and colonization have profound impacts on people’s access to food and land. Therefore, it is necessary, as a researcher exploring critical responses to these systems, that we name, we empiricize, we reduce, and we make totalizing claims, but only to understand the realities of power and its material implications. And yet, as Burawoy notes, the process of naming and objectifying can endow systems of power with more power than they deserve. We must therefore remain attuned to the lived realities of power as well as its limits, with an eye to cultivating a politics of the beyond (Bhabha 1994).

My process of researching and writing, participating and observing, was guided by the protocols developed for white, non-native researchers (Nielson and Gould 2007). It intends to contribute responsibly, interrogating the impacts of my privilege as a University-funded scholar and the disciplinary processes of contemporary knowledge production. While the safety of the ivory tower is never guaranteed and always unequal, particularly for women and people of color who contend with unfavorable norms and expectations on a daily basis, the academy can serve as an institutional safe-haven, rich with time and resources for deep thought and reflection. University affiliation provided me with access to expensive libraries, electronic reserves, and survey software, as well as the time to research other organizations, to reflect upon best practices, to evaluate the effectiveness of different organizational strategies. This relative privilege (i.e. job security of tenure, access to resources, etc), was then leveraged in the context of my

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government health warning. His thought is dangerous….I find that Heidegger’s monstrous political fallibility is, ironically, as asset. It insists that, in pursuit of the political possibilities entailed in human freedom, you proceed with caution when traversing this thinking” (Dillon 1996, 10–11). The challenge thus issued, is to dwell, in the aporetic moments of research, to be confused and conflicted, and to write and research from this place, however uncomfortable that place might feel. Michael Burawoy echoes Dillon, “We are therefore prepared to live with an imperfect science because it accentuates, rather than pretends to escape, precisely what is so “dangerous” about the world” (Burawoy 1998, 16).
research process, such that the research would not only benefit me, but the organizations with whom I worked. For example, when surveying community members at Māhuahua ‘Ai o Hoi, we (Hokulani Aikau and I) made sure to include questions which would provide demonstrated impact for grants reports and stock content for future grant applications. When interviewing organizations, I made sure to provide full access the resources I had collected, and continue to take the time to share relevant information and insights.

Responsible research informed by one’s positionality lays out an agenda for the researcher, requiring her to participate and observe, to reflect and write reflexively, to have your project serve the interests of the organizations you are working within, and choosing organizations which serve their communities. Such a mediation of the responsibility of research, particularly when built from terrain destabilized by contingency and positionality, inherits the anxious reflections of many of my colleagues, muses, and mentors. Donna Haraway writes,

So, I think my problem, and “our” problem, is how to have simultaneously an account of radical historical contingency for all knowledge claims and knowing subjects, a critical practice for recognizing our own “semiotic technologies” for making meanings, and a no-nonsense commitment to faithful accounts of a “real” world, one that can be partially shared and that is friendly to earth-wide projects of finite freedom, adequate material abundance, modest meaning in suffering, and limited happiness (Haraway 1988, 579).

While Haraway’s ‘our’ was a gesture towards a community of engaged ‘feminists,’ my audience extends beyond, to include food scholars and activists, and particularly those open to exploring their own privilege, and the work that such a process of recognition and responsibility involves. Indeed, in movements for social and economic justice, it is the responsibility of the privileged and not the oppressed to educate ourselves, to unpack our invisible knapsacks, to see the limits of our knowledge, the force of our presence, the violence of our history, and to build a methodology and research process that can be held accountable as such.

Critical ethnography understands the co-constitution of both the participant and the observer, the subjective and the objective. Wedeen writes,

Observations are not objective or external to the conditions that produce scholars doing the observing...The “observation” part of participant observation suggests
that ethnographers can observe the ongoing work...by watching how people get constituted through these activities. The “participant” part of the term suggests that the ethnographer herself can be affected by – indeed, conformed anew through – these interaction. In this view, the ethnographer can produce rigorous knowledge in part because she participates (Wedeen 2009, 89).

Researching the deployment of positionality required I acknowledge my own theoretical preferences and biases, and remain attuned to the unavoidable “consequences” of my presence on the research site, and the research site’s impact on me. According to Emerson, et al, “consequential presence,” often linked to reactive effects (that is, the effects of the ethnographer’s participation on how members talk and behave), should not be seen as “contaminating” what is observed and learned. Rather, these effects are the very source of that learning and observation” (1995, 3). Participating, for me, meant both “blending in” and “poking the bear,” assimilating into cultural norms of organizations and also challenging them; it meant acting appropriately and inappropriately, and including the consequences of these actions in the field of relevant data to be analyzed. Provocation can reveal power in ways that assimilation or silence observation cannot.

Further, the new ways of being and understanding that emerge from in the intimacies produced in and through working with rather that simple on research sites impact how and what a researcher decides to write on. This suggests the consequential presence of the site on the texts/analysis the researcher produces; “Sharing everyday life with a group of people, the field researcher [enters] a matrix of meanings of the

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18 As Michael Burawoy writes, “Our commitments to positive or reflexive science occur before and indeed govern the choices and definition of problems. We may change the topics of investigation, the questions we pose, even the theoretical frameworks we use, but we rarely change our reflexive or positive convictions” (Burawoy 1998, emphasis added).

19 By “poking the bear,” I mean intentionally and unintentionally challenging logics and narratives unfolding in order to have ambiguities, ironies, and contradictions exposed and at times clarified. For example, in the summer of 2012, I participated in a future vision workshop with the board of the Hawai‘i Food Policy Council. My group imagined a “continued growth future” where the corporate consolidation of the food supply and the dependency of Hawai‘i on imported food and energy had only increased, compelling the average consumer to completely abandon the home kitchen in favor of corporate sponsored community kitchens. The state responded by banning the construction of kitchens in all new homes, and subsidizing the conversion of home kitchens under the banner of sustainability and reduced home energy consumption. A radical fringe of homemakers, the Bitches with Kitchens, organized in response. We made t-shirts and staged a Yes-Men-esque intervention at the Hawai‘i Ag Conference reception. We received a lot of negative feedback about our use of the word Bitch, but in the process were able to actually engage people in a conversation about the importance of skills, of resistance, and of reclaiming language. In the Spring of 2011, I intentionally ‘poked the bear’ when I forwarded an email to the 2500 person COMFOOD List-serve, entitled “Seder Plate for Food Deserts.” The email gave rise to over 200 responses from list-serve participants debating the utility of the term “food deserts” and its racist implications.
researched, to participate in their system of organized activities, and to feel subject to their code of moral regulation” (Emerson 1995, 2). This “feeling subject to” involves a process of ethico-political reflection by the researcher on what she observes, what truths to tell and what secrets to keep. Hokulani Aikau proposes the notion of kuleana as a way of thinking broadly about the responsibilities and accountabilities of the researcher in the field. She writes:

I have used the Hawaiian concept of kuleana as an ethical marker and an analytic tool…the word kuleana, when understood as both responsibility and authority, directs me as a native scholar who conducts research in my community, to maintain a balance between my responsibility to academic research and the structures of authority legitimated by this system, and my responsibility to the people whose life stories I feature in this book and the structures of authority that operate at the interpersonal level. My understanding of kuleana thus forces me to be accountable to the rigors of academic research, my community, and myself (Aikau 2012, 29).

Critical positionality required that I understand myself and my privilege as variables co-constituting the multiple truths research site, but in the process of contend with the politics of these truths, their value in relation both to the academy (and the demands of my degree) and the community with whom I worked. Nielson and Gould propose a model of research for non-natives that roots research practices in forms of respect that make sense for the communities one is researching (2007). As a haole researcher working with local food justice organizations, respect meant acknowledging the histories of settler colonialism in Hawai‘i, particularly as they impacted community relationships to land and food. It meant that my access to the community historical and cultural knowledge had to be earned over time and that I could not assume that the community should trust my intentions. Particularly as the research brought me into a larger community

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20 Emerson writes, “Moreover, it will often be the care that relationships with those under study follow political fault lines in the setting, exposing the ethnographer selectively to varying priorities and points of view. As a result, the task of the ethnographer is not to determine “the truth” but to reveal the multiple truths apparent in others’ lives” (Emerson 1995, 3)

21 Throughout this dissertation, when referring to whiteness in the context of Hawai‘i, I use the term haole. Drawing on Judy Rohrer’s sociological interrogation of Haoles in Hawai‘i the co-constituted categories of “locals,” “haoles,” and native Hawaiians honor the profound impact colonization had on the racial ethic make up of the local population and the power differentials produced by this history (Rohrer 2010). While native Hawaiians “trace their genealogies back to the time before Cooks arrival,” local identity is the racial-ethnic amalgamation produced through plantation immigration (including but not limited to Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Portuguese, and Samoan). Haole, then, is the form of whiteness produced by colonialism. It is produced not just by the haoles themselves, but also the Native Hawaiians and locals who were experiencing colonialism, albeit in structurally different ways, co-terminously.
conversation about the role of science-based research for the community, in the processes of negotiating a response to the NOAA Sentinel site designation, respect meant qualifying the role of scientists (myself included) and the value of our research to the community, allowing the community’s traditional and practical knowledge-holders to integrate science into their research agenda, rather than the other way around.

Respect in the context of food justice organizations on the continent also involved verbally acknowledging my whiteness, the privilege it gave me both within the food system and as a researcher participating in anti-racism workshops (discussed at length in Chapter 2). It meant that my experience as an activist often mattered more than my education, experience that I often leveraged to get access to interviews and site visits when scholarly curiosity would not suffice. Organizers were much more interested in my experiences working at the Vice President of the Hawai‘i Food Policy Council and owning a small business than they were in my research as a scholar.

In both contexts, respect also meant changing the technologies used to collect and record data. When travelling to food justice organizations in lower income communities, I often avoided taking pictures and recording conversations because of the negative experiences of academic voyeurism into poverty. I was very wary of passing out research consent forms and the politics of implying that because my research was funded by organizations, that the knowledge captured was ‘owned.’

Capturing the multiplicity of truths and the complexity of the everyday involved particular forms of writing and re-presentation. Multi-media, film, photography, reproducing extended segments of interviews, etc., can all be used as tools in the service of allowing the field to speak to audiences in ways the researcher might not understand. Michel de Certeau understood the complex meanings invisible to the researcher to be the palimpsests of truth and resistance that emerge in the colonial practices of knowledge production (de Certeau 1984). Although participant observation is meant to, as much as possible, confront and resist colonial dynamics of power, post-colonial research is an impossible possibility which should set new ethico-political standards for research and writing, one of which might be new methodologies for capturing and re-presenting untranslatable narratives into published work.
Chapters as tools: Dissertation as toolkit

This dissertation is organized around three spheres of engagement: the community, the economy, and politics. In Chapter 2, I lay out the industrial food system and situate the food justice movement as a response to “The” Food Movement, defined as the mainstream rejection of certain features of the industrial food system.

In Chapter 3, I examine how critical positionality is driving the formation of intentional communities rooted in difference. This chapter most clearly lays out processes of critical positionality, particularly through the tools provided by dismantling racism workshops. Examining the core conceptual features of ‘community’ within food justice work, it argues that critical positionality organizes how political affiliation and solidarity are understood and enacted, allowing an alternative notion of community to inform the new economic and political imaginaries explored in the subsequent chapters. Key features of these new theories of community are 1) the work of dismantling racism (which involves the writing of new histories for communities of color, identifying white privilege, and developing ways to create more just relations within communities of difference); 2) building resilience; 3) enabling self-sufficiency and autonomy; and 4) empowering political agents.

In Chapter 4, I show how these new communities, rooted in critical positional relationship with one another, are developing new economic practices and identifying spaces of empowerment and autonomy. It explores the struggle of food justice organizations to attain and maintain economic viability and argues that it is the critical positionality of organizational leadership, staff, and volunteers that has driven the invention of a hybrid, non-capitalist marketplace for social entrepreneurialism and community-focused economic growth. What has emerged from the work of food justice organization is a new discourse and practice of economic development and self-determination that issues strong challenges to corporate capitalism, new forms of economic subjectivities, and a prototype for a post-capitalist food system that values community, people, labor, and culture. It is a form of economic activism that hybridizes the possibility of capitalism, attempting to eschew the exploitative relations underpinning blind corporate-led economic development while at the same time understanding the power of the present industrial marketplace to shape communities. The tools discussed
are for fundraising, identifying new markets, and cultivating new economic subjectivities: new producers, workers, entrepreneurs, and consumers.

In Chapter 5, I lay out the complexity of the industrial food/policy system in the United States. The industrial food system and the food/policy system are deeply interconnected and mutually reinforcing. I argue that food policy councils are an attempt to democratize both the industrial food system and the policy theory, simultaneously. I then examine how attention to critical positionality within food/policy work suggests the need for a theory of tactical policy activism as a way of framing state engagement from a politics of difference. Tactical policy activism demonstrates the ways in which structurally oppressed groups can engage the state without simultaneously endorsing the legitimacy of that state or having their work co-opted. Community-based policy activism, understood in its structural context, denaturalizes the liberal hold on our political imaginaries, by suggesting that individuals and organizations can affect meaningful change within the system while at the same time working day to day to transform it. At its core, this chapter questions how organizations can develop transformative political projects that nevertheless engage the state? Does state engagement necessarily imply cooptation? Is cognitive dissonance possible is social organizing such that groups can pursue reformist campaigns and transformative projects simultaneously?
Chapter 2: From Foodies to Food Justice

“While the character and action of corporate power needs to be recognized and understood, we need to see that farmers, consumers, and local communities are not simply victims or pawns and that they are capable of resistance and regeneration.” Jack Kloppenberg et al, *Coming into the Food Shed,* (1996)

This chapter examines the historical roots of the food justice movement and the ideological and discursive contexts though which it emerges. I begin by explaining how the industrial food system organizes the global production and consumption of food according to the logics of neoliberal capitalism. I then show how this system has had a disproportionately negative impact on low-income people of color. Next, I discuss the critical responses to the industrial food system exemplified by contemporary alternative agrifood movements and how these critiques, when rooted in critical positionality, have driven the creation of a discourse and practice of food justice in the United States.

*Industrial Food*

Popularized by Michael Pollan, I use the term “industrial food system” as a way of understanding the dominant ways of producing and consuming food in the United States. Capitalism, in its relentless pursuit of continued profits and growth, provides the governing logic, the institutions, and the policies that organize the production, distribution, processing, and consumption of our food (P. Roberts 2009). A “High-Volume/Low-Cost” model, the industrial food system is designed to maximize profit by minimizing costs via the traditional market mechanisms of increased efficiency, specialization, and economies of scale. In terms of its own prioritized values (high volumes, low costs, high profits) the industrial food supply has been amazingly successful. The introduction of chemical fertilizers and pesticides (as a way of absorbing the excess nitrogen based munitions of World War II), new irrigation technology, and the development of water-hungry, hybrid crop varieties facilitated the standardization and mechanization of farming. Transforming the face of American farming from local-oriented, family-owned, diversified farms to the mono-cultural mega farms that stretch
across the American mid-west, the American agricultural sector is in the business of growing commodity crops, a large percentage of which are genetically modified corn, soy, and cotton (Magdoff, Foster, and Buttel 2000; Pollan 2007; P. Roberts 2009).22

The US government’s agrifood policies played a key role in driving the transformations that gave rise to the industrial food system. As the agricultural sector began to face increasing global competition from producers in the Global South, President Nixon appointed Earl Butz to be Secretary of Agriculture in 1971. Butz imagined that food could be the basis of US Global Power, as farmers would produce stockpiles of food that the US could release onto the world market when it saw fit (W. Allen and Wilson 2012, 113–114). Butz would bring a fresh new approach to governmental assistance of agriculture. Prior to Butz, New Deal policies contained overproduction and maintained the value of commodity prices by paying farmers not to farm.23 Butz, who had ties to large agribusiness, encouraged farmers to plant “fence-row to fence row” and “get big or get out.” Butz subsidy system, still in place today, bases payments on production levels: the more you grow, the more you receive.24

Today, the top ten percent of subsidy recipients receive seventy-five of the subsidies, totaling $200 billion between 1995 and 2011. The average subsidy for the top one percent was $110,373 while bottom eighty percent of subsidy recipients received an average of $1,858 (Environmental Working Group 2011). Corn growers are the largest subsidy recipients, receiving more than $81 billion. Fruits and vegetables, also known as specialty crops, are generally not subsidized. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimates that sixty percent of the farmers in the US do not receive governmental assistance. In addition to subsidies, a post-Butzian USDA gears funding for

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22 From 2000 to 2012, the percentage of corn grown in the US that is genetically modified increased from 25 percent to 88 percent; cotton increased from 61 to 94 percent; and soybeans from 54 to 93 percent (Fernandez-Cornejo, Jorge 2012).

23 The Naylor curve captures this decidedly non-typical supply and demand curve. Naylor argued that in contrast to other marketplaces, where suppliers can adjust supply numbers in accordance with price signals and changes in demand, debt incurred when prices of commodities drop (due to increased demand) compels them to actually grow more food, not less. Michael Pollan describes, “The production of corn increases every year in order for farmers to pay for their losses, but this results in a decreased price of corn. Therefore, farmers tend to grow even more corn - trapping themselves in a never-ending cycle of debt” (Pollan 2007, 55).

24 The contemporary industrial food system emerges because of US agrifood policies encouraging monocultural production of commodity crops in the 1970s; however, as Philip McMichael argues, it has roots in the colonial and post-colonial systems of agrifood production and trade, or what he terms the first and second food regimes (the contemporary industrial food system being the third (McMichael 2009).
research and development towards technological innovations that increase the productivity of large farms, and structures access to capital such that larger farms can more easily borrow money to improve infrastructure and on-farm technology (W. Allen and Wilson 2012, 100).

As farming became increasingly commodity and production oriented, it “helped galvanize the emergence of a growing class of well-capitalized and technologically sophisticated producers” who were receptive to the commodified inputs that industrial agriculture relies upon: fertilizer, commercial seed, petroleum based pesticides and herbicides, and heavy machinery (J. R. Kloppenburg 2004, 31). Capital intensification drives the cost of farming up, as farmers are dependent upon imports they once sourced on farm. Today, agriculture in the United States relies heavily upon the use of fossil fuels, water, chemical inputs, and corporately owned seeds for its level of productivity. From the costs of running machinery, the application of fossil fuel based inputs, the need to transport food for processing and then to the site of consumption, experts conclude that it takes about 400 gallons of oil each year to feed each US Citizen (McLaughlin et al. 2000; Pfeiffer 2006). As Dale Pfeiffer writes, “We are dependent upon the energy of oil and natural gas to seed our crops, maintain them, harvest them, process them, and transport them to market” (2006, 1).

Figure 1: Fossil Fuel Use on Farms (Mironowski 2004)

The US alone applies over 1.2 billion pounds of pesticides per year (US EPA 2001). In the last thirty years, this has increased thirty-three-fold, as farmers have
abandoned the practices that naturally reduce pests: diverse planting patterns and traditional crop rotations (Pfeiffer 2006, 23). Simultaneously, food is travelling farther and farther on its journey from farm to table, averaging over 1,500 miles per item (24); Pfeiffer writes, “An increasing percentage of the food eaten in the US is grown in other countries, including an estimated thirty-nine percent of fruits, twelve percent of vegetables, forty percent of lamb, and seventy-eight percent of fish” (2006, 24). Consequently, the food system now uses more petroleum than the entire transportation sector combined (P. Roberts 2009). Given the rising costs of oil, and the finite amount of oil available for extraction, the oily foundation of the industrial food system raises serious questions about its sustainability, independent upon the contribution of these inputs to environmental degradation, species extinction, super-weeds and invasive species, and climate change.

Land degradation, soil depletion, desertification and water contamination are also hallmark consequences of the industrial agricultural (which is inextricably bound to the industrial forms of food consumption described below). Whether we have the necessary natural resources (land, soil and water) to sustain the industrial model of food production is a looming question. Pfeiffer provides the following bleak statistics:

- Since 1945, the total land degraded by soil depletion, desertification, and the destruction of tropical rainforests come to more than five billion hectares, or greater than forty-three percent of the earth’s vegetated surface (11).
- Each year, ten million hectares are abandoned due to severe degradation.
- In soil made vulnerable by agriculture, erosion is reducing productivity up to sixty-five percent each years. This soil is eroding 30 times faster than the natural formation rate (12).
- Every year the US loses more than two million acres of crop land to erosion (13).
- In the US agriculture consumes eight-five percent of the freshwater resources, which are severely under threat from over-use, salination, and contamination (15).

Beyond the negative impact that industrial agriculture has had on the environment and natural resources, it is also imbricated within exploitative social relations characterizing historical and contemporary economic and political development in the US. For example, the industrial agricultural model has consistently discriminated against women and

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25 This global marketplace is now writing the genetics of crop varieties as crops are being engineered (through traditional breeding methods and the more controversial process of transgenics) to be ‘flight’ and ‘transport’ ready.
people of color. Built upon a slave-economy in the South and corresponding efforts to marginalize black landowners in the north, the farm policies of the US government match their support for commodities with support for white men. Despite promises of land and a mule to every freed slave, the US government failed to secure this land, leaving many to either migrate to the North for employment, or work as sharecroppers caught in a cycle of debt. Because many of the black men who stayed in farming worked on small farms, the US’s policy of ‘get big or get out’ disproportionately drove black farmers from their land (W. Allen and Wilson 2012). As farming became increasingly capitalized and technologically intensive, lack of access to capital, both on the basis of farm size and due to a racist/sexist system of discriminatory, private-sector lending, drove black farmers to the US government for assistance (via the USDA’s county-network of Farmers Home Administration councils). There they would confront the same ‘good-ole boy network’ “supporting their friends and punishing their enemies” (ibid).

For example, Will Allen describes a complaint filed to the USDA’s Civil Rights Office against the supervisor of the Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) in Gates County, North Carolina:

The complaint said that black farmers in the county often received loan payments in June, well into the planting season – long after white farmers in the county received their payments. The black farmers said that they were routinely given less than they needed to stay afloat, while white farmers in the county were awarded the complete amount of their financial need. The black farmers said they had been forced to sell their livestock at a loss in order to make loan payments after threats from the FmHA of foreclosure…A subsequent investigation by the USDA found a “pattern and practice” in Gates County “of black farmers being foreclosed, liquidated, or being forced to sell of their property” by the county supervisor. Black farmers were not informed of debt restructuring loans offered by the FmHA. Their land was appraised at less than its real value. Waiting periods for loans were much longer for blacks than for whites. Black farmers were told that if they sold their farms, they would be given money to build homes outside of Gates County. When black farmers did sell their land, their property was usually

26 Allen and Wilson describe this process; “Upon hearing word of Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, some were said to have walked to the entrance of their plantation only to turn directly around and come back. Its was unclear what freedom meant – or would mean. Many who remained entered into sharecropping agreements with their former slave owners. This arrangement turned out to be the primary economic relationship of blacks and whites following the war…in theory this was a much better deal than slavery. In practice though, sharecropping often became slavery under a different name. A sharecropper often needed to borrow money from the landowner in advance of the planting season only to find himself unable to pay the debt back after they settled up. The tenant farmer and his family could soon be caught in a cycle of debt” (2012, 46–47).
purchased by a “select group” of which landowners or timber entrepreneurs. One black farmer told investigators that when he approached the FmHA office to ask if there were any loans for economic hardship because of high production costs, he was told there were none. Yet in 1979 and 1980, a twenty one year old white male received $237,000 in economic emergency loans from the Gates County FmHA office to purchase and maintain a thirty-acre farm” (W. Allen and Wilson 2012, 102–103).

This “good-ole-boy network” was not just characteristic of the USDA in the South; rather, the USDA as a whole has consistently ranked the lowest federal agency in hiring and promoting minorities (P. Allen 2004, 147), suggesting that a culture of white privilege is integral to not just the programs but the agency itself.

Women have also been systematically excluded from farming and the administration of agricultural research, while at the same time providing much of the labor needed to make the industrial food system work. Agriculture ranks as one of the lowest sectors in terms of female owned-businesses, and women, like black farmers, tend to own smaller farms which are structurally disadvantaged in the programs provided to supporting farming in the US (P. Allen 2004, 154). Women’s wages are also consistently lower than men’s within in the agricultural sector, sometimes as low as $0.63 on the male dollar (ibid).

Finally, the industrial food system continues slavery’s tradition of exploitation of farm workers. It is estimated that there are at least 10 farm workers for every farmer in the US (P. Allen 2004). The majority of farm workers are people of color, and they are paid significantly less than farm operators (Food Chain Workers Alliance 2012). Agriculture is among the most dangerous industries in the US, and as such, farm workers endure hazardous working conditions, with daily exposure to dangerous pesticides, herbicides, and heavy machinery (Schlosser 2001). Farm workers experience little to no job security, and many lack formal citizenship status (ibid). Similarly, the food processing industry also relies heavily upon undocumented immigrant labor and exposes these workers to harsh, inhumane conditions that their lack of citizenship often prevents them from reporting and organizing against. While meat packing, for example, used to be among the most well-organized and well paid trades in the US, today the opposite is true (Schlosser 2001). Corporate consolidation over the supply chain has led to the significant reduction in worker pay and worker’s rights.
Building upon the global networks of European and American colonialism, the globalization of industrial agriculture is known as the ‘Green Revolution.’ The “Green Revolution” was an effort to increase the agricultural productivity of the Third World through specialization in export-oriented commodity production and the introduction of industrial farming techniques. Carried out through an alliance of scientists and agribusiness, First World governments and charitable foundations like the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, the Green Revolution introduced chemical inputs, machinery, and hybrid seed varieties to smallholder markets under the auspices of hunger relief and development. As farmers transitioned to industrial farm techniques, production exploded.27

The increases in food production afforded by the technologies that characterized the Green Revolution were not equitably distributed, ironically increasingly the availability of food to communities who already had ready access. Dale Pfieffer writes, “In spite of a seventy percent increase, the Green Revolution has led to a seventeen percent increase in calories available per person. Everyone in the world could have a daily intake of at least 2,720 kilocalories (1 kilocalorie = 1,000 calories) if food were distributed equitably” (2006, 10). Indeed, as I will explore at length below, while the industrial food system has increased productivity, its commitment to profit over people has led to the construction of an increasingly inequitable system of distribution. Additionally, it was clear over time that this growth was not sustainable and that these industrial agricultural practices would have a wide-range of negative social and environmental externalities, including:

The exacerbation of regional inequalities, generation of income inequalities on the farm level, increased scales of operation, specialization of production, displacement of labor, accelerating mechanization, depressed product prices, changing tenure patterns, rising land prices, expanding markets for commercial

27 Dale Pfieffer writes, “Between 1950 and 1984, as the Green Revolution transformed agriculture around the globe, world grain production increased by 250 percent…it was made possible by fossil fuel-based fertilizers and pesticides, and hydrocarbon-fueled irrigation” (Pfieffer 2006, 7).
outputs, agrichemical dependence, genetic erosion, pest-vulnerable monocultures, and environmental deterioration (J. R. Kloppenburg 2004, 6).

The Green Revolution was thus a pivotal moment in the “self expansion of capital,” laying the ideological and infrastructural foundations of a global, market-centered system of agricultural and food production (J. R. Kloppenburg 2004, 160). Guided by a firm belief in the market and the logic of comparative advantage, the expansion of the industrial food system and the technologies characterizing the Green Revolution continued through the 1990s, as Washington Consensus policies restructured Third World economies (and more specifically their agricultural sectors) along neoliberal lines (Stiglitz 2002).

Although it is outside the scope of this dissertation to explore the many debates regarding the purpose and consequences of the Green Revolution, it is important to understand the role it played in globalizing the industrial model of agricultural production and creating a global market that further privileged and increased the power and profits of the agribusinesses who dominate the US food system. Indeed, as their power expanded and they were able to tap into the cheap labor and resources of third world countries, the industrial food system within the US is increasingly characterized by fewer and larger corporations that control the growing/production, processing, and manufacturing, and the sales of most food-related commodities: William Heffernan, in a 1999 report to the National Farmers Union, estimates the 75% of the food in the United States is controlled by the top 4 agribusiness giants: Monsanto, Cargill, Novartis/ADM (Archer Daniels Midland), and ConAgra (1999). The complexity of their investments and their manifold roles in producing processes and distributing food is made more difficult by the many brand and names they operate under.28

Indeed, processing, or the rendering of agricultural commodities like corn and soy into food we might want to eat is central to the profitability of the industrial food system for large corporations. Less than $.16 of every food dollar spent in the United States goes

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28 Heffernan writes, “Increasingly, these firms are developing a variety of different alliances with other players in the system. Acquisition is still a common method of combining two or more firms, but mergers, joint ventures, partnerships, contracts, and less formalized relationships, such as agreements and side agreements, are also utilized” (1999).
to the farmer, and this is due in part, to the massive global network of industrial farming operations, who take advantage of cheap land and labor.

Today, the largest and most profitable food and agricultural companies in the United States are no longer in the business of farming; rather they are business of manufacturing, marketing, and distribution. From ConAgra to Cargill, from Kraft to Pepsico, fewer and fewer manufacturers and processors are in control of more and more of the food that Americans eat on a daily basis.
The consolidation of food retail, processing and distribution, forms a global supply chain that allows retailers to source food from where it is grown most cheaply, and sold where it can be marketed and distributed most profitably, regardless of the distance. As Americans increasingly move to urban centers, further and further from where food is produced, they increasingly rely upon large corporately own distribution points to

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29 According to Mike Davis, soon, or perhaps already, the earth’s urban population will surpass the rural. Davis characterizes this “epochal transition” as “a watershed in human history, comparable to the Neolithic or industrial revolutions” (Davis 2006, 1). Davis’s provides the following statistical proof: “In 1950 there were 86 cities in the world with a population of more than one million; today there are 400, and by 2015 there will be at least 550. Cities, indeed, have absorbed nearly two-thirds of the global population explosion since 1950, and are currently growing by more than a million babies and migrants each week. The world’s urban labor force has more than doubled since 1980, and the present urban population – 3.2 billion – is larger than the total population of the world when John F. Kennedy was inaugurated. The global countryside, meanwhile, has reached its maximum population and will begin to shrink after 2020. As a result, cities will account for virtually all future world population growth, which is expected to peak at 10 billion in 2050.

30 The industrialization of agriculture and food by the patterns As industrialization of agriculture transformed the American “country-side,” it also contributed to the waves of rural to urban migrations that defined the 19th and early 20th centuries in the Europe and the US. The forcible separation of the man from the land enabled capitalist development (J. R. Kloppenburg 2004), occurring in a variety of waves, each hailed as benchmarks in the history of agricultural change: the enclosure of the commons, the
purchase their food (P. Roberts 2009). Today Walmart captures twenty five percent of all food dollars spent in the US (and over fifty percent in thirty-seven metro areas) (Mitchell 2012)\textsuperscript{31} with the rest spent at one of the top four grocery corporations;\textsuperscript{32} the majority of the food purchased at these outlets is highly processed versions of corn and soy or animal products reliant upon corn and soy for feed and fattening (Pollan 2006).

Indeed, urbanization, hand in hand with industrialization, has agricultural underpinnings, changing while simultaneously being changed by the ways in which food was/is produced and consumed. The urban character of modern eaters is important insofar as the majority of urban Americans are locked into the industrial agrifood landscape, disconnected from producers and dependent upon industrial food retail outlets for the food they need: fast food outlets, drive-thrus, portable foods made for eating in cars or on the go; microwaved able, ready made foods, snacks, diet foods, etc. The urban industrial eater is not invested in how her food is grown, processed, prepared or sold. She increasingly eats her meals outside of the home and from transnational corporate restaurant chains, or buys it in convenient stores, drug stores, gas stations, or international grocery chains. Indeed, just as the demise of small farmers and home gardens characterizes the current state of industrial agriculture, the languishing art of cooking and Mom & Pop restaurants best describe eating in the industrial food economy.

\textsuperscript{31} Walmart boasts 4601 stores in the US alone (which includes their 620 Sam’s Club stores), employing 1.4 million ‘associates’, and an additional 6025 stores in 27 other countries (“Walmart Locations” 2013, “Walmart Stores” 2013).

\textsuperscript{32} After Walmart, who size and scale certainly sets the standard for food retail in the US, are Kroger Corp: (2422 stores operating under the following banners: Baker's, City Market, Dillons, Food 4 Less, Foods Co., Fred Meyer (technically a hypermarket), Fry's Food and Drug, Gerbes, JayC Food Stores, King Soopers, Owen's Market, Pay Less Food Markets, Quality Food Centers, Ralphs, Scott's Food & Pharmacy, and Smith's Food and Drug names) (“The Kroger Co. - Home” 2013); Safeway Inc.: (2123 stores operating under these additional banners: Carrs, Dominick's, Pavilions, Randalls, Tom Thumb, and Vons) (“Safeway - Our-Story” 2013); and SuperValu Inc. (2434 stores operating under the following banners: Save-A-Lot, Acme Markets, Albertson's, Cub Foods, Farm Fresh Food & Pharmacy, Hornbacher's, Jewel-Osco, Lucky, Shaw's, Shop 'n Save, Shoppers Food & Pharmacy, and Star Market (“SUPERVALU INC. - Grocery Retail and Supply Chain Services” 2013).
Eating ignorantly, and on the go, the industrial eater is caught in a dizzying maze of food marketing and nutritionist discourse\(^{33}\) that unmoors food from its cultural contexts (of both production and consumption) and reduces it to its nutritional components. Nutritionism is what enables the marketability of the industrial farming model – transforming consumer preferences from whole-foods to processed memes, such that the food we grow is not food we can actually eat (Pollan 2008). Despite the proliferation of scientifically backed, heart-association enforced, FDA approved products and diets, every year the number of individuals suffering from diet related health disorders increases. Such is the logic of a system built around the commodification of food – i.e. we have to keep buying, according to which ever recent diet fad. Although the food system generates billions of dollars in revenue, less and less of that is going to actually buying food (Nestle 2002).

Just as our cities grow, leaving more and more people dependant upon a capitalist-food economy, our land is giving out under the pressure of this industrial model of food production. Just as our appetite for industrial food is reaching epic proportions, our bodies are collapsing from the weight of this cultural decision.

![Figure 3: Obesity in the US 1990 v. 2010 (CDC 2013b)](image)

The US, and particularly is low-income communities of color, faces an epidemic of diet-related health disorders. In 2007–2008, more than one-third of United States adults were obese; Non-Hispanic blacks have the highest age-adjusted rates of obesity (49.5%)\(^{33}\)

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\(^{33}\) This “ideology of nutritionism,” as Pollan defines it, has been “the best thing ever to happen to the food industry…Nutritionism supplies the ultimate justification for processing food by implying that with a judicious application of food science, fake foods can be make even more nutritious than the real thing” (Pollan 2008, 52).
compared with Mexican Americans (40.4%), all Hispanics (39.1%) and non-Hispanic whites (34.3%). Obese individuals are at increased risk of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and certain cancers, among other conditions. In 2008, medical costs associated with obesity were estimated at $147 billion; the medical costs for people who are obese were $1,429 higher than those of normal weight (CDC 2013b; Coleman-Jensen et al. 2011; Critser 2003)

In our food system, understood as a set of interconnected networks through which people and products flow, both race and class play a significant role in the directing of who has access to food, and the quality of food they have access to. For example, “white middle-class consumers – in alliance with the growing class of government professionals – actively supported the growth of large scale capitalist urban provisioning systems because they saw this system as cheaply and efficiently meeting their needs” (DuPuis and Goodman 2005, 366). These urban provisioning systems, consisting of large grocery chains (if one is lucky), fast-food restaurants, convenience stores, etc., obscure the relationship between people and their food. As middle-class industrial eaters increasingly rely upon megastores like Walmart and Safeway for their food, the “ghetto-fied” foodscapes of American inner cities, mirroring their physical and architectural landscapes, were defined by absence, abandonment, exclusion, and ruin. As Camilo Vergara describes:

The pre-civil rights ghetto in America included among is population minority professionals, affluent merchants, and middle-level entrepreneurs. Today, those who are able to flee have left. Now the vast majority of the population is unable to move elsewhere or is restricted in its movements to places they can afford, where public and subsidized housing, shelters, rooming houses, welfare offices, soup kitchens, and social services are available – that it, to other ghettos.

A new, more complex form of exclusion has developed. In a society where the suburb is the norm, the ghetto is now even more isolated, separated from wealthier neighborhoods either by transitional areas, or a succession of poor and blue collar communities, or by physical barriers such as expressways, rail lines, and rivers” (1995, 5–6).

Controlled through networks of selective provisioning, inclusion and exclusion, the industrial, urban food economy is defined, in part, by the quality and accessibility of the
foodstuffs it deliver to different communities.\textsuperscript{34} The new, complex forms of exclusion order the inner city’s industrial foodscape through “grocery-store gaps,”\textsuperscript{35} lack of direct public transportation routes to suburban grocery stores, and a dependence on emergency food provisions distributed via soup kitchens and homeless shelters. Vast tracks of land sit vacant or abandoned,\textsuperscript{36} while cheap, processed food retailers, fast-food chains, and liquor stores take over the spaces that remain.

![Figure 4: Food Deserts in the U.S.: This map uses the original and single measure of food deserts—low-income areas where a significant number or share of residents is far from a supermarket, where “far” is more than 1 mile in urban areas and more than 10 miles in rural areas (USDA 2013a).](image)

Fresh food, often high in price and lower in profit, has increasingly skipped over the neighborhoods inhabited by the most poor. Take the beaming contradiction that is the South Bronx. The South Bronx is home to Hunts Point market, one of the world’s largest food distribution centers. Although every day, hundreds of thousands of pounds of

\textsuperscript{34} According to Amin and Thrift, the city is “a whole series of circulating networks of command and control,” producing an “oligopticon,” a series of partial orders, localized totalities, with their ability to gaze in some directions and not others” (2002, 92).

\textsuperscript{35} For example, a study conducted by The University of Connecticut’s Food Marketing Policy Center found there were thirty percent fewer supermarkets in low-income areas than in high income areas and these low-income areas had fifty-five percent less grocery store square footage than their wealthier counterparts. The level of unmet food demand in low income communities was as high as seventy percent (Harper et al. 2009, 12).

\textsuperscript{36} Detroit boasts roughly 40 square miles of land that sit vacant or abandoned, twenty-five percent of its total area (Garcia 2010).
produce travel through the South Bronx, little of it actually consumed in the surrounding neighborhood (Severson 2010).

Today, entire cities are becoming food deserts as the networks of food provisioning follow the logic of profit-seeking capital and not biological necessity. Experts have declared roughly half of Detroit (pop. 916,000) a food desert (Gray 2009), and remarkably, there is not one national grocery store chain operating within its city limits (Garcia 2010, 12). Prices at grocery stores within the inner city can be up to twenty percent higher than their suburban counterparts, while convenient stores and gas stations, the more common provisioners of food in the inner city, similarly inflate the prices of food. The justifications for this lack of service are clearly rooted in a capitalist logic; “The retail food industry goes where it can make the most money…Supermarkets are also not charities, not can they take tax write offs for acts of goodwill and social responsibility…[T]he operating expenses of inner city supermarkets, including rent, insurance, and security, are higher than those of non-inner-city stores” (Winne 2008, 87–88). As a result of fewer choices, higher prices, and lower wages, inner city residents spend a significantly larger share of their income on food (ibid) and suffer disproportionately negative side effects from the food they eat.

The jobs that industrial food economy provides for urban dwellers only reinforces the demand for cheap food and governmental food programs for low-income individuals and families. According to the Food Chain Workers Alliance, more than eighty-six percent of workers reported earning subminimum, poverty, or low wages, resulting in a sad irony: food workers face higher levels of food insecurity, or the inability to afford to eat, than the rest of the U.S. workforce (Food Chain Workers Alliance 2012). The

37 George Kaplan points out the double meaning of the term; “A desert is, of course, a place distinguished by the absence of vegetation, rain, etc., which is the sense in which the word is used…But the word ‘desert’ is also a verb – “to leave someone without help in a difficult situation and not come back.”…The verb ‘desert’ focuses on action and agency, emphasizing that the lack of access to good food in some areas is not a natural, accidental phenomenon but is instead the result of decisions made at multiple levels by multiple actors” (Mari Gallagher Research and Consulting Group 2006, 5).

38 As I type this, fast food workers in New York, Detroit, St Louis and Chicago are engaging in the first ever coordinated strike across fast food chains (including McDonalds, Popeyes, Subway, Burger King, Wendys, and KFC) demanding $15 an hour and the right to form a union without retaliation (Democracy Now! 2013; Sands 2013).
industrial food system thus goes hand in hand with an “emergency food system” which manages the crises that its inequitable distribution and low-wages produce. Run by a complex of non-profit organizations and faith-based charities, consisting of food pantries, food banks, soup kitchens and food rescue programs, the emergency food system forms an infrastructure of stigmatization, dehumanization and disempowerment for inner-city dwellers who remain incapable of feeding themselves; “far from making the lives of poor people similar to those of the rest of society, emergency food tend to segregate the poor into separate programs” (Poppendieck 1994, 70). As the neoliberal state shifted the care (and control) of the poor to the private sector, emergency food programs now play an integral and indispensable role in maintaining the functioning of an economic system that only increases inequality. Indeed, “the institutionalization of such programs seems to embody or at least accept, that destitution is to be a permanent part of our society and that it is acceptable for poor people to be dependent for their basic needs on the generosity of strangers, on wholly discretionary giving” (ibid, 73).

The industrial food system has had disproportionately negative impacts on low-income communities of color. It is a system that has led to the exponential increase in diet-related health disorders, as obesity and hunger exists side by side for communities that lack access to affordable, healthy food (Critser 2003; Drewnowski and Specter 2004; Kameshwari Pothukuchi and Jerome L. Kaufman 1999). Food writes the city’s racial spatial orders onto bodies in the form of obesity, type II diabetes, and other diet related illnesses. Understood as a set of practices, habits, and social relations the habitus of the urban industrial foodscape produces diseased and obese bodies. Unlike previous times

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39 According to Jan Poppendieck, “Since 1980, [we] have witnessed the development of an extensive emergency food system to respond to hunger in the United States. The term “emergency food” refers to programs that distribute food, either as prepared meals or as groceries, directly to people in need. In common parlance, the term soup kitchen is usually used to designate a prepared meal program, whether the meal is consumed on site or taken away, while food pantry is used to designate a program that distributes groceries for preparation at home. Food rescue programs are operations that obtain unused food from restaurants, caterers, and institutions such as college dining halls for distribution to soup kitchens” (Poppendieck 1994, 69).

40 The habitus should be understood as the living embodiment of historical rooted relations/structures of power, realized through practices, habits, knowledges and competencies, interpersonal relations/ways of relating, etc. The habitus is the ‘baggage’ we carry, filled with tools and equipment, roadmaps and rulebooks, that help us navigate the world around us (Bourdieu 1977, 1984).

41 Insofar as “cities are means of mass producing and acculturating bodies,” obesity has become of a part of the corporeality of poverty in the city (Amin and Thrift 2002, 103). This fatness of the inner city is accomplished through a set of work/leisure, time/space assemblages, with networks that push/compel
in history or in other places in the world, where the poor body is the starving body, today location (as the nexus of class and race relations) is the primary determining factor in rates of obesity in the United States. As George Kaplan writes, “Researchers from epidemiology and other disciplines have consistently shown...that those who live in disadvantaged neighborhoods have worse health outcomes. For a wide range of health problems across the age spectrum...where you live does make a difference” (Mari Gallagher Research and Consulting Group 2006).

Responses to the Industrial Food System

The destructive nature of the industrial food system created nodes around which activists have organized, and giving rise to “the” food movement, a movement of movements centering around developing alternative agrifood systems, products, practices, and relationships (Alkon and Agyeman 2011; P. Allen 2004; P. Allen et al. 2003; Belasco 1989; Holt-Gimenez 2011; J. Kloppenburg, Hendrickson, and Stevenson 1996; Pollan 2007). The remarkable growth and proliferation of alternative agrifood movements demonstrate a broad-based reclamation of the power of food security, food sovereignty, and food democracy as a means to re-empower individuals, families and

bodies with little time in to the most accessible, affordable and available spaces of food provisioning, spaces that provide little to no fresh vegetables, and high quantities of fats, sugars, and processed/synthetic food additives. Increased energy consumption, coupled with built environment that is inhospitable to outdoor-exercise and physical activity create conditions prime for weight gain. The biologically rooted question of what to eat is ever more being answered for us by our industrial habitus. Families spend less money on food, eat out more often, and are increasingly choosing to eat at fast food restaurants (Gardner 2009, 235). These trends are reinforced by the low cost of high-fat, highly processed foods, the high cost of fresh fruits and vegetables (which, unlike corn and soy are not subsidized by the US government). To say that the habitus of industrial food creates a system of dispositions, practices, and attitudes of inner city eaters is not to strip consciousness from the industrial eater (Guthman 2003), but to note that there are powerful structures that shape bodies and subjects.

Greg Critser writes, “Among [the poor and the working poor] obesity was rampant. As the very bottom end were households with less than $10,000 of annual income; among them, 33 percent of blacks were obese, 26 percent of Hispanics; and 19 percent of whites. For households with $20,000 to $25,000 in annual income, the rates were substantially lower; 27 percent of blacks, 18 percent of Hispanics, and 20 percent of whites were obese. At the $50,000 and above mark, the rate of blacks who were obese fell to 23 percent, Hispanics rose to 22 percent (perhaps reflecting the prototypical response to new middle-class status), and whites falls to 16 percent” (Critser 2003, 109–110).

Naomi Klein proposes using a “movement of movements” to describe the decentralized diversity of the “anti-globalization movement.” She writes, “This movement we sometimes conjure into being goes by many names: anti-corporate, anti-free-trade, anti-imperialist...I think it is more accurate to picture a movement of movements – a coalition of coalitions” (Klein 2004, 220). I found Klein’s conceptualization of the alter-globalization movement particularly useful in theorizing the landscape of alternative agrifood movements given the broad array of emphases around which particular organizations focus their work, and yet the active coalition building they engage in across these themes.
communities against the forces of capitalism and industrialization. Alternative food movements are an assemblage of different political actors and political imaginaries working towards the transformation of the industrial food system and/or the creation of alternatives to it (P. Allen 2004; P. Allen et al. 2003). These movements are as much about the cultivation of actual food and alternative food economies as they are about shifts in knowledge on the part of both consumers and producers. Through the tangibility and power of food, alternative agrifood movements suggest that despite the power of neoliberalism, and its capacity to dominate our social, economic, and political institutions, people are still choosing, en masse, to live differently, to act differently, and to eat differently – to build new economies, new communities, and practice a new politics for a post-neoliberal present (J. Kloppenburg, Hendrickson, and Stevenson 1996).

Alternative agrifood movements speak not only to the power and significance of food to humans with biological and cultural needs, but their varying strategies and tactics also demonstrate the different ways in which food provides communities for tangible opportunities within which to cultivate efficacy and express social, cultural, economic, and political agency. This agency, as the subsequent chapters will explore, targets not just the traditional institutional contexts of liberal democracy, but it also work at the level of community relations and alternative political economies. Patricia Allen writes:

Many people do not feel helpless in the face of this staggering array of environmental and social problems. They realize that, as the country moves further and further from democratic practice, these conditions have been accompanied and enabled by a process that wrests decision-making away from ordinary people. They witness the failure of electoral politics and political parties to solve agrifood problems, a situation they fear can only get worse, as the decision making ability of elected governments is superseded by the power of global capital to limit choice…Not content to let food production, distribution, and quality be defined and determined by faceless others, they have taken action. Consciously or not, they are a part of a new assemblage of movements sweeping the nation, movements for alternative food and agriculture (P. Allen 2004, 2).

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44 For further analysis on the growth and significance of alternative agrifood movements in the US see: (P. Allen 2004; Belasco 1989; Katz 2006). For analysis of how these movements have emerged and affected change globally see: (Borras 2008; Desmarais 2007; Mertes 2004; Petrini 2006; Polet 2004; Laura T Raynolds, Murray, Douglas L., and Wilkinson 2007; Reitan and NetLibrary 2007; K. Warner 2007; Welton 2001).
Although there is no single political imaginary framing alternative agrifood movements, and as such, no common strategies or tactics through which they imagine and enact change, alternative agrifood movements have created a transnational network of locally grounded alternatives to the industrial food system (Wekerle 2004, 381).

In their most common themes (going local, slow, healthy etc, which I discuss at length below), critical reference to “a” food movement has emerged in the common discourse and the literature, such that “The” food movement us understood as a social movement largely reserved for whites and elites.45 Both mainstream, and more critically nuanced agrifood movements share a sense of ‘publicness’ in this reference, forming what Michael Warner refers to as a “counterpublic” through which the imaginations of food and agriculture in the US are being transformed (2002).46 This counterpublic exists in the many concrete placed-based projects across the US, in the national gatherings, in social media networks, and through organizational networks and affiliations, with the email list-serves, forums, webinars, classrooms, workshops, memos, you-tube videos and publications. Through these media, alternative agrifood movements offer new languages and practices into the cultural common sense, such that industrialization is no longer perceived to be the inevitable future of our food system. Interpolating subjects into this public through messages to “go organic,” “go local,” “go fair,” and “go slow,” these messages suggest we are all eaters, growers, workers and co-producers constructing a food system in our daily lives, encouraging us to activate our subjective agency to create

45 For example, in a recent April 2013 article that went viral across the foodie webosphere, Food Justice Leader Malik Yakini (of the Detroit Black Food Security Network, Detroit Food Policy Council, and the IATP Food Fellows program) wrote of that lack of appropriate representation and leadership in community food organizations (Yakini 2012). As commentary on his insights circulated, there was repeated reference to “the” food movement, like Cheryl Danley makes here: “In his essay “A Disturbing Trend,” my friend and fellow Food and Community Fellow Malik Yakini,wrote about the shocking lack of diversity in the Food Movement leadership” (Danley 2013; Yakini 2012). Although Yakini himself does not reference the food movement, responses to his blog post repeatedly did, suggesting the way in which discourse constantly consolidates and reduces the plurality of alternative agrifood organizations and in some sense makes existence of A food movement to which I will juxtapose food justice.

46 Warner (2002) advances the concept of the public as a way to understand the role of discourse and articulation in the building of communities. The social-constitution of publics involves embodied creativity and world-making (54) realized through active processes of reflection and negotiation (60). Drawing on Nancy Fraser, Warner defines counterpublics as the “parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter-discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs” (Fraser 1992, 122–123). These counterpublics offer concrete sites through which new identities are formed and transformed (87), and become social movements when they offer subject agency in relation to the stat (90).
a something better. And yet, as it is with other counterpublics, with their own strategies and tactics of resistance, this public is rife with deep dissonances, disagreements, and discord. This disagreement, however, is not a challenge to this counterpublic, but rather constitutive of it, as scrutiny, critique and rejection are quintessential expressions of the counterpublic’s agency to negotiate the terms of its alternative world.

Table 2-1 - A Movement of Movements: This table maps the various effects of the industrial food system to which alternative agrifood movements, in their various thematic incarnations, have responded. I have also listed the organizations interviewed for this dissertation when applicable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effects of Industrial Food System</th>
<th>Movements</th>
<th>Organizations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loss of public lands; loss of small farms, growth of corporate mega farms</td>
<td>Via Campesina, Food Sovereignty, Food Justice</td>
<td>Movimento Sem Terra,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destruction of eco-systems and biodiversity.</td>
<td>Organic/Sustainable Agriculture, Environmental Justice Permaculture, Seed Saving</td>
<td>Navdanya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breakdown of regional economies, lack of access to locally grown foods.</td>
<td>Local Food Movement</td>
<td>Farmers Markets, CSAs, Slow Money, Farm-to-School, Farm-to-table restaurants (Town);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The increasing power of global corporations.</td>
<td>Local Food Movement; Fair Trade Movement</td>
<td>BALLE, Slow Money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Its inability to provide equal access to food despite its achievements in production.</td>
<td>Anti-hunger, Emergency Food Movement,</td>
<td>Oxfam, Growing Power, Social Justice Learning Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of access to healthy food</td>
<td>Food Security; Community Food Security;</td>
<td>Growing Power, Social Justice Learning Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abundance of fast/fat/processed food, particularly in low-income communities.</td>
<td>Health Food, Food Education</td>
<td>Growing Power, Social Justice Learning Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrepit and dangerous working conditions of farm-workers and food industry workers.</td>
<td>Food Sovereignty Movement</td>
<td>Via Campesina, Coalition of Immokalee Workers; South Central Farmers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing prevalence of diet-related health problems, namely diabetes, heart disease, and obesity, and childhood obesity.</td>
<td>Farm-to-School Movement, Good Food Movement</td>
<td>A.I.N.A. In Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The loss of cultural food traditions and skills.</td>
<td>Racial Homemaking, Food Sovereignty Movement,</td>
<td>Slow Foods, The Happy Kitchen/La Cocina Allegra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slow Food Movement, Farm-to-School Movement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the following section I will review the major themes of alternative agrifood movements, considered generally. These themes have been heavily debated within the discursive spaces of this movement of movements, and are variously enacted by specific organizations. As Table 2 suggests, the debates and critiques of practices that enact these
themes have driven the evolution of alternative agrifood organizations and help to provide a context within which the political imaginary of food justice, and particularly its focus on critical positionality, makes sense.

Go Local

In stark contrast to the globalized system of industrial food production and consumption, the local food movement is an alternative agrifood movement which claims the local as a “way out” of the health (Murdoch 2000), environmental (Murdoch 1999), social, and economic food crises caused by the industrial food system (Magdoff, Foster, and Buttel 2000; McMichael 2000), promoting “a more ecologically sustainable, socially equitable, and economically viable future for the food system” (P. Allen 2004; P. Allen et al. 2003; A. Kimura and Nishiyama 2008, 49; J. Kloppenburg, Hendrickson, and Stevenson 1996). Generally, the local food movement focuses on connecting local consumers with local producers in order to strengthen local economies, increase food security, and democratize the risks and rewards of agriculture (Kingsolver 2007; Pollan 2006). As Hinrichs and Allen describe, Buy Local campaigns “invoke notions of the mythic American farmer, now embattled, in need of protection from the forces of globalization…[O]n a practical level, they aim to develop a new class of food and agricultural entrepreneurs that differs substantially from traditional commodity farmers” (C. Hinrichs and Allen 2008, 339). Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs) and farmers markets are the hallmarks of the local food movement, each seeking to reconnect people with local food producers through direct marketing schemes. Farmers markets allow farmers increased and direct access to (most often urban) consumers, increasing their share of profits while keeping money within local economies; CSAs allow consumers to “share the risk” of farming by pre-paying for a season’s bounty prior to and regardless of the quality and quantity of the harvest (Doherty 2006; E. Henderson and Van En 2007). Local food movements have also borrowed discursive and organizational strategies from those sects of alter-globalization movements that emphasize the importance of non-corporate economies and encouraging small business ownership,
couching the impact of farmers markets, CSAs, and Small Food Enterprises\(^\text{47}\) in terms of their capacity to rebuild regional food sheds and resilient economies (Tasch 2008).

**Go Organic**

Building upon the “natural food” movements of the 1960s (Belasco 1989), the movements for organic and sustainable agriculture address the ways in which industrial agricultural practices deplete and or destroy eco-systems, natural resources, the biological diversity of plants and animals, relying upon petrochemical inputs that significantly contribute to climate change (E. Melanie DuPuis 2000; Guthman 2004; Pfäiffer 2006). Organic and sustainable agriculture boasts the ability to provide food that is better for people, better for the environment and better for future generations (P. Allen 2004; C. C. Hinrichs 2007). Of all the major themes within alternative agrifood movements, the emphasis on “organics” and “sustainability” have been taken up most broadly, even by the industrial food system such that today Walmart can boast a commitment to organic produce. Certified organic products also come in a variety of highly-processed forms. Advocates for non-industrial organics argue that ‘organic’ has always been a philosophy, not a certification, and that industrial attempts to be organic fail on the basis of their commitment to mono-culture and scale, both of which are counter to the diversified, layered and interdependent ecosystems found in nature (Pollan 2006). Organic and sustainable agrifood organizations focus on educating farmers in farm practices and techniques, and educating consumers on the importance of their consumption choices, particularly given that organic food (even industrially produced organics) remains significantly more expensive than conventional food.

**Go Fair**

The Fair Trade movement responds to the global reality of the industrial food system, creating and fortifying alternative globalization networks, ideas, and practices

\(^{47}\) Woody Tasch, in his magnum opus, *Slow Money*, identifies small food enterprises (SFEs) as the building blocks upon which an alternative food economy should be built (I explore these at length in Chapter 4). He writes, “SFEs play a vital role in their local food system and prioritize this role in their mission. Each has as established customer base and a reputation for product excellence. Each is desirous of what we can refer to, without tongue completely in cheek, as “organic” growth: They wish to expand their impact, but they are opposed to growth forced by outside capital and they abjure an exit strategy that would put control of their businesses in the hands of absentee shareholders” (Tasch 2008, 52)
that prioritize social justice and ecological sustainability (L. T Raynolds 2000; Laura T Raynolds, Murray, Douglas L., and Wilkinson 2007). Laura Raynolds, et al. write, “Fair trade seeks to operate simultaneously against the market, campaigning for changes in conventional trade practices and challenging North/South inequalities, and within the market, create more egalitarian trade between Northern consumers and Southern producers” (2007, 223). More so than the local food movements and the sustainable farming movement, the emphasis on fair trade highlights the working conditions of farm laborers worldwide. It sees the importance of organic agricultural practices not just in terms of its positive environmental impacts, and the health benefits for consumers, but also the necessity of providing non-hazardous working conditions for the people who grow and harvest this food (Fridell 2007).

Go Slow, Get Healthy

As opposed to the previously discussed agrifood movements, the Slow Food and food-education movements seek to transform the practices of food preparation and consumption (Goodman 2002) that characterize the industrial food system (although they do address the ways in which these modes of consumption are inextricably tied to modes of production) (Miele and Murdoch 2003; Petrini and Slow Food (Organization) 2001; Petrini 2006; Pollan 2007). Through a variety of mechanisms: growing food at home, serving locally grown food in restaurants, or educating children on what food is, where it comes from, and why they should eat fresh food, preparing and consuming food are politicized acts capable of transforming communities (DuPuis and Goodman 2005; Goodman 2002; A. Kimura 2011). More so than the movements centered around transforming industrial agriculture, movements for food education, and healthy/ethical eating respond to the dramatic rise in diet-related health disorders that have accompanied the industrialization of food, along with the homogenization of food cultures along industrial standards. They seek to redefine what it means to be “healthy” and “eat right.” Encouraging “reflexive,” “ethical,” and “informed” consumption, these movements, particularly in their farm-to-table formations, focus on bringing local, heritage, heirloom, and indigenous food stuffs onto peoples plates. They encourage fresh foods over
processed foods, and variously address the barriers that keep people from eating fresh whole foods: time, money, education, knowledge, access to a kitchen, etc.

**Critiques of Alternative Food Movements**

The counterpublic of alternative food is not just grounded in the themes of localism, sustainability, health; rather the critiques of these themes and their associated projects, organizations, and practices, are also integral to what brings “the” food movement into being (Guthman 2003). These critiques help to make sense of the political imaginary of the food justice movement. Focusing on the shared structural underpinnings of industrial food and the “alternatives” to it, critiques on the ground and in the discursive universe consistently drew attention to how structurally rooted privilege and power continued to marginalize people on the basis of their positionality. This section focuses on these critiques and ends by linking these critiques to the concrete practices of critical positionality as they were developed by food justice organizations in the context of imagining and enacting social, political, and economic change through food.

**Ethical/Informed Eating and the Politics of Consumption**

To the extent that the local, organic, and fair trade food movements center around alternative consumption practices, they contribute to the parallel movement for “ethical eating” of which the Slow Food Movement and various food education initiatives are an integral part. Although consumption provides non-food producers with important forms of agency in the context of the industrial food system, uncritical valorization of what constitutes ethical food can reify stereotypical norms of race and gender in the construction of the ethical food agent. For example, Julie Guthman powerfully challenges the juxtaposition of fast food with slow food, demonstrating the ways in which this binary imparts “a good deal of subjectivity on to the organic slow food eater while the fast food eater is treated as a mindless dupe” (Guthman 2003, 55). Much like DuPuis and

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48 It is necessary to refer to the food movement, in the singular, despite the hybridity of its constitutive organizations and their varying thematic insofar as “a” or “the” food movement is constantly referred to in critical literature and commentary. The food movement, in the singular, is yuppy, haole, white, privileged, organic, etc.
Goodman’s critique of unreflexive localism, the unreflexive embrace of a “yuppified” slow food de-politicizes a “potentially powerful politics of consumption” by failing to consider other socially embedded power relations (*ibid*). She writes:

Little is it considered that organic production depends on the same systems of marginalized labor as does fast food. Or that organic salad mix led the way in convenience packaging and is often grown out of season. Or that fast food serves women who work outside the home who are then blamed for depending on it to manage family and work. Or that slow food presumes a tremendous amount of unpaid feminized labor (2003, 55).

In Hawai‘i, for example, ‘haole food,’ is a local incarnation of what Julie Guthman terms ‘yuppy chow’ (Guthman 2003), designated as not only not local, but as food that carries with it the complex racial and ethnic dynamics that characterize settler colonial society in Hawai‘i. Within this settler colonial dynamic that haole food, is also “hippy,” “yuppy,” “North Shore,” “Maui-fied” “organic” “health” food. Performative of an elite sensibility, the local rejection of haole food is related to the ways in which haole food is uncritically embraced by its advocates as the “right,” “healthy,” “reflexive” and “ethical” way to eat. This discourse implies that the local eater needs intervention and education, and carries the connotations of the benevolent colonizer who knows what’s best for the ignorant native (Guthman 2003). The rejection of recommendations for communities to eat organic, healthy food haole food then, (and too some extent the rejection of local/non-local organic foods and even organic agriculture) can be framed as part of a cultural resistance to haole supremacy, written off as yet another haole intervention into a way of eating that locals want to protect (Lukens and Ashburn forthcoming).

Further, as Guthman notes, movements promoting food education, food literacy, and ethical eating can reproduce these uncritical forms of consumption that reinforce gendered divisions of labor. As Aya Kimura writes, “Scholars have just begun to analyze

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49 The interrelationship between “haole” food and organic agriculture was made particularly clear to me in Governor Neil Abercrombie’s forum on food security. On his panel was a well-known organic farmer and a bio-tech rep (among others). When the bio-tech rep was asked if she thought organic agriculture represented an alternative future for Hawai‘i, she responded that there was a reason why Whole Foods (a notoriously expensive health food store) was located in Kahala (one of Oahu’s wealthiest neighborhoods) and that her family in Nanakuli couldn’t afford to eat that way. Despite the fact that the question was specifically contrasting two styles of agriculture, the answer was posed in terms of the socioeconomics of food consumption, relying upon a broadly recognized association between race and organic food/agriculture in Hawai‘i, as well as the popular critique of organic agriculture by biotech corporations that organic agriculture will never be able to feed the world, both because of relatively low yields and affordability.
the gendered implications of the contemporary call for “right food” and “eating right”…

Its hard to deny that implicit in the lament of the “lack of food education” is the image of women who cannot properly shop, cook, or feed” (A. Kimura 2011, 5). Fast, processed, and prepared foods, industrial food products allow women to balance the demands of work and home (Goodman and Redclift 1991; Guthman 2003). The ability to re-engage slow food traditions might be difficult for women who work full time outside the home. Unless critically examined, a call to slow food remains, as Guthman points out, dependent upon unpaid female labor in the home.

*Combating Neoliberalism*

Alternative agrifood movements have failed to sufficiently address the ways in which they often played into the hands of/reinforced neoliberalism. As previously discussed, neoliberalism encourages the privatization of social services and responsibility. As DuPuis and Goodman, Lockie, and Kimura have variously pointed out, both local food movements and food education movements can be used to further a neoliberal form of political logic, agrifood politics may be used to justify the withdrawal of state services and protections by emphasizing themes of local autonomy, independence, and self-sufficiency, playing into left ideals of participation and right ideals of market non-interference (DuPuis and Goodman 2005, 368; A. H. Kimura 2011; Lockie 2009; Wekerle 2004).

Gerda Wekerle writes:

> While local food agencies and advocates have often found themselves in opposition to the cutbacks and downloading of social programs by the neoliberal state, they are also in the contradictory position of being called upon to do the work of the state in meeting the increasing needs of food banks and food-related programs (Wekerle 2004, 382).

By filling the void created by the withdrawal of state-funded services, alternative agrifood movements potentially run the risk of paving the way for the privatization of

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50 Kimura distinguishes between food education and food literacy by examining the types of food education that are produced according to a neoliberal logic. Kimura writes, “At the core of privatization of food education is an increasingly pervasive approach to food education that I term, “food literacy” approach [sic], based on a deficiency framework which positive individual knowledge and skills as the sole reason for inappropriate food choices, dietary behaviors, and culinary practices. Not only is the food literacy approach highly individualistic and apolitical, but also [sic] enables and exacerbates the privatization and gendered pressures of food education” (A. Kimura 2011, 4).
food provisioning and education services. These programs reduce the problem of unhealthy eating to the individual and fail to engage more structural critiques of the political economy of our industrial food system. Understanding the ways in which the industrial food system is more than a set of practices, but also a set of policies and institutions is vital to creating effective forms of resistance.

Similarly, Kimura discusses how food education has served/can serve as a “guise for the marketing of products, and/or corporate public relations campaigns,” and a “reinforcement of the existing economic and cultural hierarchy” by reflecting the “dominant class” lifestyle and taste” (A. H. Kimura 2011, 468). By stressing the transformation of producer-consumer relations, local food movements tend to leave the larger economic relations of alienation and exploitation intact, and create little space for conceptualizing how the transformation of the agrifood system might also require a cultivation of new forms of community, solidarity, and political action.

**Social Justice Blinders**

In response to emerging discourse of food security that focused attention on anti-hunger, charity, and emergency food organizations, individuals began shifting the conversation towards the idea that communities should be able to provide their own conditions of food security in ways that are culturally appropriate, economically resilient, and socially just. This shift away from “providing fish” to “growing fisherman” led to the 1994 formation of the Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC). The CFSC engaged the public with the hopes of framing hunger and malnutrition as problems that should be addressed by communities not just by individuals, cities, or by national policy (Morales 2011, 152–153). The CFSC’s rise to prominence, and its ultimate demise in 51

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51 As the ancient Chinese proverb goes, “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.”

52 Over the 12 years of its exitence, the Community Food Security Coalition would become the foremost national organization working across the food system, from ground to garbage, from projects to policy. The CFSC sought to expand a variety of strategies they saw working at the local level. Andy Fisher, writing in 1996, described this emergent framework as it was working at the organizational level:

The community or empowerment framework for food security can also be seen in terms of such programs and advocacy as direct marketing strategies (e.g., farmers’ markets or community supported agriculture (CSAs)), urban greening and food production initiatives such as community gardens, edible landscape plantings, urban river restoration, urban forestry programs, economic development initiatives (e.g., small food processing businesses such as Justice Bakery in Los
Representative of the socio-economics of the mainstream food movement, the CSFC spoke about an “empowerment” framework without actually giving power to communities of color within its ranks. Simultaneously, this privileged imaginary, typified by the CFSC but found across organizations and communities organizing around food, was also under critique within the academy. Scholars such as Melanie DuPuis, Patricia Allen, Julie Guthman, Neva Hassanein, and Clare Hinrichs were examining the ways in which the prescriptive aspiration of foodies and food studies often reproduced the very relationships of power that underpinned what they sought to overcome (P. Allen 1993, 2004; Dupuis and Gillon 2009; E. Melanie DuPuis 2000; Guthman 2003, 2007; Hassanein 2003; C. Hinrichs and Allen 2008). Food movements with an emphasis on ‘local’ food uncritically advance what E. Melanie DuPuis and David Goodman describe as an ‘unreflexive’ localism, which “places a set of pure, conflict free local values and local knowledges in resistance to anomic and contradictory capitalist forces” (2005, 359). Conflating “spatial relations with social relations,” local food movements can potentially lead to an “undemocratic, unrepresentative, and defensive militant particularism” (ibid).

Advocates of local food consistently ignore the role of race and class in building the local agricultural system and determining who had access to that system, either as producers or consumers. Local food movements frequently (although perhaps unintentionally) deny the politics and power dynamics that characterize all local food contexts (DuPuis and Goodman 2005, 360), failing to sufficiently consider the working conditions of farm and food industry workers, issues regarding our system of land ownership and tenure (which, rooted in histories of slavery and colonialism, is unequal), and food retail industry initiatives (e.g., joint ventures between community groups and supermarkets) (Gottlieb and Fisher 1996, 197).

53 Alfonso Morales (2011) documents the story of the CFSC as it grappled to address board-member and constituent concerns about the role of race in the food system and the organization, and, relatedly, whether or not the organization adequately dealt with the impact of race on leadership, decision making, and the solutions that these leaders and these decisions proposed for communities. Erica Allen, daughter to Growing Power’s Will Allen, explained, “Initially people of color were not well represented on CFSC committees, many people attended the conferences, but we were not represented on the board. Slowly the membership pressed the organization, but some of us were frustrated by the slow movement of the CFSC on those problems associated with communities of color” (Morales 2011, 155).
disproportionately white and male), and the lack of equal access to or ability to participate in common local food programs like farmers markets and CSAs (P. Allen 2004; A. Kimura and Nishiyama 2008). For example, although direct marketing schemes like Farmers Markets and Community Supported Agriculture do increase the profitability of farming for small and local farmers, in their most common forms, they fail to increase access to fresh produce for the people who need it the most. Despite efforts to democratize the participation of farmers and consumers, white, upper income, educated families remain the primary vendors and shoppers, suggesting that efforts should be made to restructure how new markets function within alternative food systems, something I will explore at length in chapter 4 (Doherty 2006, 22–27).

Indeed, alternative and sustainable agriculture movements absorb the structurally rooted privilege of white males, without contention and redress, in the solutions they enact, often “unintentionally.” The case of Hawai‘i’s Aloun Farms is particularly illustrative of the failure of local food movements to provide a sufficient framework and discourse for attending to social justice issues. In August of 2009, the owners of Aloun Farms were indicted by the US Department of Justice for allegedly partaking in human trafficking schemes that brought agricultural workers from Thailand to Oahu under false pretenses, and then forcing them to work for years under the threat of deportation and imprisonment. Although the human trafficking issue in agricultural production is an issue in and of itself, Oahu’s local food movement failed to connect these issues to demands for food security and sustainability. The need for more local produce and more local farms to grow this local food subsumed any acknowledgement of the current social and economic inequalities underpinning the state’s agricultural sector in its current, neo-colonial, semi-industrial form.54 Neither public nor privately organized farmers markets

54 Like most colonial economies, the historical shift to export-oriented, plantation agriculture partially explains Hawai‘i’s contemporary dependency on foreign grown food. Prior to European settlers, the Hawaiian people had collectively managed their land and resources through an ahupua’a system. Carlos Andrade writes, “The concept of the ahupua’a, as an applied practice and way of seeing, governed people’s survival and their capacity to secure ready access to necessary resources” (Andrade 2001, viii). The illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy forever enshrined the transfer of land and natural resources away from Native Hawaiians into the “haole run” governmental infrastructure of the state of Hawai‘i. Settler colonialism, both in Hawai‘i and elsewhere, relies upon practices of land and resource expropriation and exploitation; “Territoriality is settler colonialism’s specific, irreducible element” (Wolfe 2010, 388). Agriculture is often the primary means through which settlers remake the land, making themselves, their foods, their crops, and their land practices a permanent part of the landscape they have
removed or even censured Aloun Farms, while public figures in the local and sustainable food movement stressed that the incarceration of the Aloun Farm owners would hurt Hawai‘i’s food security (Dudley 2010). The Aloun Farms case highlights the emphasis, both within industrial agriculture and the movements that have arisen to transform it, on farm operators over farm workers, such that the working conditions of farm workers are often ignored in the more prioritized advancement of food security and a food self-sufficiency agenda. As Patricia Allen writes, “Workers are simultaneously everywhere and nowhere in the agrifood system” (P. Allen 2004, 148). Although movements for sustainable and organic agriculture to argue that the safety of these farming methods provide safer working conditions for workers, and the fair trade movement highlights the significance of building and alternative global economy around these values, little to no effort has been made to bring these workers to the forefront of these movements and address the visions they have for building an alternative future for food.

*Integrating Means and Ends: Toward Food Justice*

The food justice movement did not simply emerge in critical response to the failures of “the” food movement to adequately contend with questions of race and white privilege in the organization’s internal operations and external programming; the food justice movement also has roots in the environmental justice movement, civil rights movement, feminism, farm-workers movements, movements for indigenous sovereignty, and the alter-globalization movement (Alkon and Agyeman 2011; Gottlieb and Fisher 1996; Morales 2011). Indeed, civil rights organizations had long provided food to communities (the Black Panther school breakfast program being one of the most famous), activated subjective agency within the economy through boycotts, and critiqued the rise of the agricultural dominance of the US as relying heavily upon slave labor. Similarly, Cesar Chavez was not just a hero for the labor movement in the US, but brought increasing awareness to the American public around the insufficient wages paid to

settled upon. In Hawai‘i, the introduction of sugar, pineapple, macadamia nuts, and today GMO seed corn marks the continuing process whereby the accumulation of wealth through settler-industrial agriculture has profoundly impacted the ecological and social conditions of the local food system. These forms of agricultural create structural barriers to local food farmers, as they are forced to compete within a market where land and labor values are determined by the major market players: namely, corporate industrial agribusinesses rooted in the colonial tradition.
workers growing the foods Americans loved to eat. These historical links are important insofar as they link food justice into a trans-historical struggle of people against injustice, broadly, and suggest that food is a site whereby communities can shift the structures and material impacts of power. They show movement participants not only that change is possible, but the various effective strategies that they can use to achieve success. Social movements not only adapt strategies from those who came before them, but previous social movements provide road maps for understanding the structures of power and the ‘wiggle room’ available. They provide access to structures of power and allow for new social movements to build off of wins.

Taken together, the critiques of the mainstream food movement have consistently focused on its inattention to the structural underpinnings of the industrial food system; these “social justice blinders” have thus created an alternative that reproduces the very distribution of power defining the industrial food system (C. Hinrichs and Allen 2008, 339). Unless understandings of local food security integrate definitions of social justice, local food movements run the risk of marginalizing the same people who are marginalized within the industrial system of food production. As Alkon and Agyeman write, “Essential to the food justice movement is an analysis that recognizes the food system itself as a racial project and problematizes the influence of race and class on the production, distribution, and consumption of food… Through food justice activism, low-

55 The collective political identities forged in food justice activism build upon those that were built in past struggles for social justice. As Dorceta Taylor writes, “activists do not fashion new collective identities from scratch; instead they redefine existing roles within established organizations and use these templates for creating new identities” (Taylor 2000, 513). These movements significantly shape the political practices of food justice organizations, as “activist performances” within social movements are “bundled into repertoires of collective action that draw on a long history of previous social movement struggles (Tilly 2006).

56 Historical agency is an integral component of re-building efficacy within both traditional and participatory democratic processes and institutions. As I discuss in Chapter 2, re-learning and re-telling the stories of these historical struggles is integral to the process of building community through anti-racist trainings within food justice work. These trainings reject mainstream portrayals of black urban communities as ineffective or weak and provide identities for current political struggles that are historically valid and capable of impacting change. As Steven Gregory writes, “The tendency to view the black poor as collectively weak and ineffective, or in its updated version, as socially isolated and institutionally disabled by joblessness and by the exodus of the middle classes, has not only obscured the struggles that black urbanites have continued to wage against racial injustices; more broadly, it has also elided the role that relationships of power and political processes play in determining the significance of race, class, and place in contemporary American society” (Gregory 1998, 10).
income communities and communities of color seeks to create local food systems that meet their own food needs” (Alkon and Agyeman 2011, 5).

Food Justice organizations have increasingly developed integrated, practice based critiques and solutions that ground the alternatives to industrial food in a new ontological and political framework: what I am calling critical positionality. Their political imaginary, and the associated strategies and tactics for enacting change, links means and ends, arguing that who participates, imagines, and leads efforts for change matters as much as the alternatives one proposed. As we explore at length in Chapter 3, the ‘first’ step in food justice organizing is often a mapping out of the power dynamics within a community, within an organization (who should not necessarily be assumed to be a part of or representative of that community), and a concentrated effort to sync the two with a more equitable, just ideal. This ideal is rooted in active participation and the igniting of political-economic agency. The work of identifying and dismantling power requires significant, unending emotional energy and time. However this critically positional, process oriented method of organizing grounds new visions for building alternative economic and political models, models which, I argue, in turn provide evidence of a community based, post-neoliberal present.

Food justice organizations are developing a new politics and a new economics rooted in structural critique and built upon the assumed difference (rather than the essentialized homogeneity) of their communities and stakeholders. It is a “fight for a horizontal, inclusive, radically different food system;” one that involves a conceptualization of politics that locates the moment of transformation in the here and now, and not to a deferred moment in time (Wilson 2013). This radically inclusive, horizontal politics emphasizes participatory democratic organizing and as such is significantly different from the models of political behavior offered within the modern, liberal political imaginary. However, the rejection of representation as a pathway to democracy does not therefore mean that food justice organizations reject the state all together. Rather, as I explore in Chapter 5, as food justice organizations practice a politics of difference, spaces open up for tactically engaging the state as a means through which to leverage the privilege of those who are involved in the movement, in order to
effect broader change and/or create conditions of possibility that state regulation might make more difficult or prevent.

Similarly, as examined in Chapter 4, these organizations suggest that building new economies need not require the rejection of the infrastructure provided by capitalism. Rather, new markets are built within, on-top, among, and in the hidden spaces of the capitalist marketplace. The measure of value governing decision-making and tracking/measuring growth and development, however, is radically different. By identifying the ways in which the capitalist marketplace has systematically discriminated against people of color and women, and understanding that this systematic discrimination is integral to the ability of enterprises to operate at a consistent profit, the alternative economic models built by food justice organizations demonstrate how economic justice can emerge: through participation, inclusion, and an ethic of parity. This alternative value framework is then applied as a way of holistically measuring access to and control of resources, opportunity (for jobs and funding), growth (of businesses and expansion of enterprises within the marketplace), and profit (how it is distributed across an enterprise and an economy). In summary, food justice integrates the means and ends of agrifood activism.
Chapter 3: New Communities

“As soil goes, so goes the civilization”

Woody Tasch, Slow Money

“The fate of the seed can be predicted by the health of the soil where it takes root”

Will Allen, The Good Food Revolution

In 2011, I attended three day retreat at Growing Power’s Milwaukee Farm entitled, Growing Community From the Ground Up. The retreat began with an all-day Dismantling Racism workshop where twenty-five active participants within the food justice movement explored the multiple dimensions of their identity, as it informed how they came to organize around food and agriculture issues, and what role they should play in this movement. Our conversations wove the personal in with the political, creating an uncomfortable and yet nevertheless productive ground from which to explore the innovative, high-yield growing methods, that Growing Power is internationally known for. Set in a context where the power of food to build community was immediately observable, this training was the first moment where I began to understand the role and significance of anti-racism work, as intentional explorations of power through which to build community through food.

In this chapter, I will discuss the formulation of my theory of critical positionality, as a way of theorizing the role and impact of anti-racism in the food justice movement. As a defining feature of the food justice movement, anti-racism workshops provide a toolkit for movement participants who must navigate the matrices of power and difference as they construct people’s relationship to one another and to food. Although identities are located and knowledge is situated, these workshops intentionally engage with the hybridity of differences as they map onto subjects, cultivating a sense that differences are negotiable. Food justice organizations participate in and have developed this extensive anti-racist curriculum to challenge and ultimately transform the work/assumptions/identities of individuals within their organizations, and how these participants imagine and enact change.

Critical positionality, as a set of intentional practices that organizers within food justice work developed to organize in rather than against difference, reveals the simultaneity of power: that food is always already raced and that race reveals its
materiality through our relationship with food. It creates a tenuous ground for solidarity, suggesting that communities are capable of navigating the complex, intersectionality of power, identity, and materiality as they inform participants relationship to food. I argue that by cultivating practices whereby difference informs empowerment and responsibility, critical positionality drives alternatives to neoliberalism: communities rooted in autonomy, self-sufficiency, empowerment, and difference.

*Growing Power: Race and the Food System*

In 1993, Will Allen, former NBA basketball player and Procter & Gamble rep, opened a roadside produce stand in Northwest, Milwaukee. Before “food deserts” had entered into common parlance, before obesity was an epidemic, and late-onset diabetes was renamed Type 2 (to reflect the growing number of children being diagnosed), Allen decided farming within and selling food to low-income communities, and the power that comes from being your own boss, mattered enough to take a huge risk, professionally and financially. Will’s Roadside Stand would later become Growing Power, arguably the US’s most famous urban farm and food justice organization.

Despite the abundance of food grown on Growing Power’s two-acres, you could almost drive by it without noticing. The farm is nestled in between a largely residential neighborhood, on a busy commercial thruway. Facing the farm there is a concrete structure that unites six large greenhouses. When you enter the greenhouses for the first time, after acclimating to the warm, humid air (although I visited there in May, it was below freezing outside) and the loud humming sounds of their aquaponic systems, the first thing you notice is that there is something growing everywhere.

Once you’ve taken in the metropolis of plant and animal life on this small urban farm, you begin to notice the other part of Growing Power that holds it together and sets it apart: the incredible diversity of its team. People of all ages, colors, sizes, and abilities busy themselves with the multi-faceted operation at hand. In many ways, the two serve as metaphors for one another – the complexity of the community mirrors the complexity of
the food-ecosystem and the health of the two, which is dependent upon this complexity, echo one-another. Such is the over-arching foundation of the food justice movement, underpinning its commitment to critical positionality - a bountiful, diverse eco-system requires difference and just as farmers and gardeners have long developed curriculum to contend with the necessities of maintaining and managing the diversity of plant and animal on the farm, food justice organizations recognize that the socio-cultural diversity is also integral to a healthy food system.

Above all else, food justice work is defined by its constituencies’ intentional and cultivated hybridity; individuals identify as Black American, African American, Pan-African, Latino, South American, Central American, Asian, Local-Asian, South Asian, Haole, European, white, and/or Caucasian; as First-nations, Indigenous, Native-American, Settlers, and/or Colonizers; as Citizens, Non-Citizens, Immigrants, Migrant workers with papers, workers without papers; as women, men, transgender, gay, lesbian, and/or queer; as rich, poor, and middle class; as institutionally-educated, life-educated, employed, unemployed and/or under-employed. This hybridity receives explicit attention within the movement (Alkon and Agyeman 2011). Critical positionality is thus the defining feature that sets food justice organizations apart from their alternative food counterparts, moving organizers beyond simply attending to race, towards dismantling racism through anti-racist organizing and training. These methods, with their roots in critical pedagogy, critical race theory, and the critics of second wave feminism (Alcoff 2000; Anzaldúa 1987; Bailey 1998; Blee 2001; Bystydzienski and Schacht 2001; Jakobsen 1998; Lorde 1984; Mohanty 1991; Narayan and Harding 2000; Narayan 1988; A. Thompson 2003), help participants to identify and articulate the intersectionality of power, “refuse[ing] primacy to either race, class, gender, or ethnicity, demanding instead a recognition of their matrix-like interaction” (Butler 1989, 16 qtd in; Hill Collins 1991). Striving to see the ways in which difference[s] map onto bodies and minds non-hierarchically, critical positionality allows participants to “attend to multiple forms

57 There is a parallel between the academic literature on whiteness studies and the discourse and practice of identifying and combating white privilege on the ground. While the literature focuses on whiteness produced through racist structures, the workshops extended critical explorations of structurally rooted forms of power in their development of complimentary strategies for community empowerment, drawing upon the pedagogical insights of theorists like Fiere (2000). I expand upon these complimentary strategies below.
of subordination and to a plurality of social needs, interests, and desires; in short, a politics of difference rather than one of identity” (Gregory 1998, 19). This politics of difference, I argue, is at the foundation of food justice work, cultivating a consciousness and set of habits among participants that, ultimately, transforms the way they understand themselves, their work, and their community.

Anti-racism trainings provide participants with the opportunity practice this theory of difference. In the opening hours of our training at Growing Power, trainers asked us to stand in a line. People were asked to step forward or backwards based upon their answers to a variety of questions: Did you go to public school? Do you have white skin? Are you straight? Did you go to college? Do you have student loans? Are you employed? Do you support your family? As we positioned ourselves across the room, we saw our relationships to where we started. Some of us were far ahead, while others were far behind. In this matrix, however, we also saw our relationships to one another.

Our trainers then asked, “What other material circumstances do you face that put you ahead or hold you back?” A white pregnant woman spoke of her struggles to find a job while pregnant and then finding out that the job she was offered would not provide her any maternity leave. Another white male spoke of the transgendered youth working in his project who lacked family support and was forced into foster care. Such an exercise helped to both identify concrete structures of opportunity, but also personalize experiences of these structures. Some spoke of the power of their lighter skin as they worked in certain realms while feeling that at the same time this privilege marked them as an outsider in their own communities. At the end of the exercise we were challenged to formulate ways to understand the impact of these differences and how we could all be accountable to the ways in which our privilege requires recognition and responsibility.

Anti-racism contends with power and difference in ways that do not minimize how these differences matter (Butler 1993). As explored in Chapter 2, the food justice

58 Food, and the movements that form around it, demand a form of research and engagement that sees ‘mattering:’ the ways in which power materializes through matter (in the form of bodies, environments, cultures, etc) and produces knowledge (or things that ‘matter’) (Butler 1993). Power matters, it is corporeally and imaginatively productive and socially produced and negotiated. Identity, as it is explored in relation to resistance movement, is my attempt to think about the materiality of power as it frames the intelligibility of bodies in spaces of community. Community, then is the space of self-other relationality through which knowledge is produced and identity is both fixed and negotiated. We are not only what we will ourselves to be, but what we are in the eyes of the other – what we are understood to be.
movement “recognizes the food system itself as a racial project and problematizes the influence of race and class on the production, distribution, and consumption of food…Through food justice activism, low-income communities and communities of color seek to create local food systems that meet their own needs” (Alkon and Agyeman 2011, 5). Within discourses and practices of food justice, attention to difference, and the simultaneities of power as it shapes both race and food, one cannot consider the question of hunger without looking at who is hungry and how they have been systematically excluded from networks of industrial food distribution; one cannot ask questions of farming without questioning who is farming and how traditional institutional support for farmers has privileged white farmers at the expense of women, people of color, and farm workers. As Why Hunger’s capacity-building coordinator, Lorrie Clevenger, with whom I attended Growing Power’s Dismantling Racism workshop, explained this to me during my visit to their New York offices:

So we have to start there - If we really want to fix our food system, we need to understand why we don’t value labor. Why we in particular don’t value the labor of people of color. We need to understand why there are… zoning laws that prevent grocery stores, for example, from going into communities of color? Why is it that the highest percentages of obesity and diabetes and things like that are in the lives of people of color? When you really start looking at who the impacted communities are, they are people of color or people from low income communities (OI - Clevenger 2012).

By linking subjects with structures, and showing the ways in which power is produced through the simultaneous production of both, anti-racist curriculum involves challenging the dominant historical narratives that shape our understanding of the present, connecting material realities with the structural and institutional power relations. Malik Yakini, of the Detroit Black Food Security Network writes:

One of the ways that oppressive systems continue to maintain the dominant narrative is by disconnecting us from our historical memory. This disconnect deprives everyone of learning from the rich historical and culture legacies of African Americans and other People of Color. A food movement that fairly represents African Americans and other People of Color must honor and lift up our stories, cultural perspectives and lessons learned (Yakini 2013).

Food justice organizations design programming and projects in order to address historically produced stigmas and assumptions, particularly as they inform the
community’s relationship with food, agriculture, and their capacity to engage and transform this system. Particularly in the context of black communities, slavery and the role African American labor played in the building/profitability of the industrial food system, economic development through food and agriculture requires intervening and transforming perceptions of farming and food production. As Will Allen writes, “I realize that by bringing farming and fresh food to the city, I could play a part in healing a painful rift in African American history between its agricultural past and its urban present. I could help rebrand farming as something that could be entrepreneurial and black owned rather than something associated with sharecropping and slavery” (2012, 206). As participants relearn, organizations provide spaces for the articulation of life experiences and historical knowledge that would otherwise go under-valued. Revealing the relationship between knowledge, history, and agency, critical historiography is a mechanism through which to transform political imaginaries: both perceptions of the possible and the ways to achieve change. As we examined in Chapter 2, links to histories of resistance and the success of allied social movements inform contemporary activism. They demonstrate how communities have already overcome injustice and fought for better living conditions, work opportunities, and equal rights under the law. By de-centering hegemonic constructions of history, critical historiography empowers new voices to join the conversation and imagine what food justice looks like. Critical historiography thus shapes the solutions food justice organizations propose and put into practice.

Such is the story of Inglewood’s Social Justice Learning Institute (SJLI) and how it transformed from a youth empowerment organization located in a local high school to a complex of food and agriculture initiatives transforming the entire community.\footnote{SJLI is part of Why Hunger’s Grassroots Action Network that included both Growing Power and People’s Grocery. I did not learn about SJLI until their Executive Director, D’Artagnan Scorza was nominated for a BALLE Fellowship along with Hawai‘i activist Andrea Dean and Nikki Henderson from People’s Grocery. BALLE, Building Alliances for Local Living Economies, is another example of a decentralized network of food justice organizations that seeks to share information, promote best practices, and cultivate alternative communities for alternative economies. They provided many of the webinars that informed this dissertation, and also introduced me to organizations like SJLI. According to BALLE, “Our Fellows are at the forefront of rebuilding communities from the ground up through creative economic development strategies that enhance the staying power of locally owned businesses, by applying their passion for social change to business-oriented solutions, and through sustainable innovations in manufacturing, finance and food. BALLE Fellows participate in an intense, close-knit and rigorous 18-}
was originally founded to provide empowerment for African American males in Inglewood’s public school system through their Black Male Youth Academy. During one of the first years the program was in session, the program participants began investigating the social and economic environment surrounding their school for their culminating research project. They decided to focus on food, and specifically the role it plays in the urban environment. The academy’s emphasis on translating research into beneficial community action led the men to build a community garden. This garden would reveal to the organizational leadership that food was an immediate material need of the community and a way to engage them in conversations about education, race, and social justice. Today the organization has three gardens, two school gardens, a CSA which it delivers to fifty regular subscribers, and eight gardeners enrolled in its home-gardeners program, which trains community members to grow food in their yards for the purpose of sharing with neighbors, feeding their families and contributing to the organization’s CSA.

![Picture 6: Queens Park Community Garden, Project of Social Justice Learning Institute, Inglewood, CA](image)

The organization also hosts a monthly Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) Classes and weekly Active Living Community Days (each have an average of 25 attendees) that integrate education, garden work, training, and physical activity.

In late December 2012, I visited the SJLI office and gardens, and interviewed Derek Steele, Civic Engagement Programs Director. During our conversation he articulated how attention to history as it shaped the material conditions of people on the month leadership immersion program that strengthens their capacity for transformative change in their communities” (BALLE 2012).
basis of their identity provided a consciousness raising process that ultimately empowered them to engage in concrete, project-based food justice work:

The Social Justice Learning Institute exists to improve the health, education and well being of youth in community of color by empowering them to enact social change through research, training and community mobilization. What does all that mean? Really we work with you. We have two tracks, the academic side and we have the food justice side.

And the academic side actually spawned off into food justice work. We teach the youth that we're working with how to do research, how to be critically aware of their surroundings and their environment, and how knowledge of self, knowledge of their culture and knowledge of their past can help them realize how they can change their environment and change the future. So in 2009 they did a research project on what the food environment looked like in Inglewood. And so they found out that it was a food desert. Inglewood has over 200 fast food restaurants, 126 liquor and convenience stores. We only have three grocery stores that sell produce and the produce that they sell is not affordable to people who live here. So after we researched, the boys’ proposed solution was to start a community garden. They lobbied the city and the school district for some land that's across the street from Morningside High School.

When they got this plot of land, it's about a quarter of an acre, it was rocks, gravel, broken glass, cracked pipes, the whole nine. They mobilized their student body and in the course of a year turned all that land over and turned it into a community garden. That was the first community garden we built in Inglewood, it's called the Empowerment Community Garden.

This link between knowledge, power, and praxis is what Paolo Friere calls *conscientização*, “learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality (2000, 35 fn. 1). Disconnection from histories of oppression, resistance, and empowerment must be addressed through food justice work in order for communities to feel ownership of the work of food justice organizations. Indeed, the goal of these organizations is not to serve the community – it is to be and build this community, simultaneously.

Anti-racism trainings also respond to the desire of white people to work in solidarity with communities of color and yet the longstanding observation that they lack a toolkit on how to do so responsibly. Identifying privilege in its manifold forms, anti-racist training issues particularly strong challenges to the work of white people within the food justice movement, challenging white organizers, staff, and volunteers to *de-center* whiteness in their conceptualizations of problems and solutions of communities and their
relationships to food. It demands that privileged subjects recognize their privilege, identify the ways in which the privilege conditions much of their work, and informs how they imagine their own participation and the participation of others in solutions. Rachel Slocum writes:

Whites need to do the heavy lifting of thinking through privilege. However, whites should not imagine that they can simply learn enough anti-racist practice to do it well or to shed responsibility…Of critical importance is that white members of the movement recognize how they benefit personally and organizationally from the work of racism in the food system, in the community food movement and in society more generally (Slocum 2006, 336–339 emphasis added).

These trainings require that one not only think about the ways in which they have been excluded from the institutions and opportunities of power, but also the ways in which they have benefitted from the systematic exclusion of others as well. Anti-racist curriculum moves the conversation of race beyond the question of “diversity,” demonstrating the ways in which race and racism are actually “a relational process embedded in society” (Shapiro 2002; Cited in Slocum 2006, 331), a process in which we all participate. One of the firsts steps in dismantling racism workshops is clarifying the difference between racism, prejudice, and discrimination, and the ways in which racism, as a structure not only holds people back – it puts people ahead. As the Allies For Change’s Working Assumptions for Antiracism Training explains: “Racism, sexism, heterosexism and every other form of oppression are simultaneously systems of oppression and systems of advantage” (Morrison n.d.). This requires that participants understand the difference between structural forms of power and violence (racism), and personal behaviors that can be narrow-minded and hurtful (prejudice/discrimination). As Patricia Hill Collins writes:

Although most individuals have little difficulty identifying their own victimization within some major system of oppression – whether it be by race, social class, religion, physical ability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age or gender – they typically fail to see how their thoughts and actions uphold someone else’s subordination. Thus white feminists routinely point with confidence to their own oppression as women but resist seeing how much their white skin privileges them” (Hill Collins 1991, 229).
Thus, white participants engage in the discursive work of identifying and describing their own privilege, in order to become more accountable (McIntosh 1989, 1). By using a lens that puts the invisible manifestations of power into focus and recognizes the complex intersecting forms privilege as they manifest within organization, antiracism training subjects the working relationships of staff, volunteers, and board members and community to critical scrutiny and highlights how organizations and individuals have multiple subject positions within the matrices of power (Slocum 2006, 339).

Recognizing privilege as a part of transforming unjust relations of power, oppression creates new critical forms of consciousness that structure both the day-to-day internal processes and culture of food justice organizations and their outreach to communities and allied organizations. This extends from how organizations run meetings, what they intend to accomplish (in both the short and long term), their planning process and expectations, the methods through which they achieve process, and the forms of evaluation from which their progress and success is measured. Indeed, the driving idea behind having community food organizations confront not only the racism of the food system, but the racism within their organizations and the community writ large, is that an organization that ignores its own race dynamics will inevitably recreate these dynamics in its own work. This grounds the practice of empowerment and disempowerment in the here and now; it is an integral part of everyday work – as organizations and participants confront the manifestations of their own privilege, particularly as it shapes their role in and their expectations of the organizations they are working in and with.

Of all the personal lessons that I had to learn in my work within food justice organizations, linking my organizational expectations with my white privilege was one of the hardest. During my time serving as the de facto Executive Director of the Hawai‘i

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60 Peggy McIntosh’s White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack is a central feature of antiracist training. Her entire questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1.0.
61 The seeds for challenging these expectations were originally planted during my years organizing with anarchist communities in San Diego. During my post-college years, I participated in several anarchist organizations where the ‘principles of unity’ for meetings allowed for more horizontal exchange among participants. Anarchists have very intentional processes for running conversations, most popularly demonstrated in the ‘assembly’ model that spread during the Occupy Wall Street protests in 2011-2012. The most powerful principle was the idea of “stepping back and stepping up.” The idea behind this principle was that those participants who felt empowered to speak regularly needed to step back, to allow for other voices to join in the conversation. Those who felt uncomfortable and discouraged from
Food Policy Council, I failed *miserably* at running meetings in ways that ensured equal participation of all voices and viewpoints. It was only because of the support of the board that I was able to identify this failure and work towards the development of a skill set that would allow me to improve. I learned just how artful facilitation must be if meetings are going to actively disrupt and distribute power. While initially I felt frustrated by my board’s desire to spend a significant time ‘talking-story’ about our lives and our work outside of the counsel, I learned that this was an integral part of building the necessary relationships between board members that would allow us to get work done collaboratively and cooperatively.

Similarly, During my tenure as a Sea Grant Graduate Trainee, I participated in 3 of the initial NOAA Sentinel Site62 designation meetings that included community members, staff from local community organizations, kūpuna, researchers from local NGOs, and professors from Hawai‘i Pacific University and the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa. At the initial meeting, participants came with shockingly different perceptions of their role in the community – such that it was clear from the beginning that some scientists were not aware of their relative privilege and the histories of scientific exploitation that made kūpuna wary of their proposed projects. In the proposed agenda, the meeting’s coordinator, a haole male from NOAA suggested that we spend 10 minutes introducing ourselves. We quickly went around, spouting off our organizational

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62 NOAA, the National Ocean and Atomspheric Administration created the Sentinel Site Program in order to better coordination among stakeholders. Their website explains, “NOAA has coastal monitoring and data collection tools, sanctuaries, estuarine reserves, marine protected areas, and other assets located in coastal areas around the nation. These places and equipment serve a variety of functions, such as protecting natural resources, measuring tides, and establishing accurate height measurements. At coastal locations—particularly in places with dense populations and bustling maritime activity—the number of regional NOAA assets are particularly dense and bustling, too! The NOAA Sentinel Site Program capitalizes on these activities, tying together existing NOAA tools and services in select areas into regional ‘Cooperatives.’ These Cooperatives bring to bear the full force of NOAA coastal and ecosystem monitoring, measurement, and tools in partnership with federal, state, and local efforts to help solve concrete problems that people are facing in coastal communities. Who will use the products and services developed by these Cooperatives? People such as coastal zone, resource, and protected area managers; emergency and disaster response personnel; restoration practitioners; coastal research scientists; commercial fisheries managers; members of the maritime commerce and insurance industries; and local planning, tourism, and economic development boards. The NOAA Sentinel Site Program directly engages local, state, and federal managers as part of the Cooperative team. By doing so, managers help ensure the types of science conducted, information gathered, and products developed are immediately used for better management” (US Department of Commerce n.d.).
affiliations. As we all prepared to proceed with the incredibly ambitious agenda, one of the kūpuna stood up and requested a revision. She wanted to know why people were interested in the community? What was the intention of their work here? After a much longer series of introductions was offered, the kūpuna left to attend another meeting. Although this scheduling conflict was pre-existing, the ‘forced’ revision of the agenda and the departure of the kūpuna made it clear to participants that the meeting was run inappropriately. By failing familiarize everyone with one another and locate participants and their relationships to place and history, organizers missed an opportunity to address the history of science and conservation-based work in Hawaiʻi, particularly the ways which both have alienated communities from the resources they have traditionally managed, empowering state and federal agents to determine best uses.

At the second Sentinel site meeting, organizers attempted to rectify the situation. Kūpuna were offered assigned seats at the center of the room. The meeting was ‘professionally’ facilitated and the kūpuna were given time to explain their research priorities, over and above the interests of the participating scientists.\(^\text{63}\) Although this in no way rectified the concerns of the community and kūpuna who attended, there was a shift in the balance of power as it informed the agenda and guided the purpose and intent of those in the room.

Compare this to the way that GFJI ran the dismantling racism workshop at Growing Power. In that instance, an agenda was reviewed at the outset, with comments and changes made based on participant feedback. The meeting was co-facilitated and participants were given “guidelines” on how to participate and thoughtfully communicate with and listed to others. The “work” of the meeting was postponed until the groundwork was set. Then, significant time was spent locating individuals – who they were, where they were from, why they were there, and what their goals were. In the context of a dismantling racism workshop, it might seem reasonable for participants to spend this amount of time doing this groundwork. But what I have learned in the process of doing

\(^\text{63}\) One of the main concerns of the kūpuna was the negative impact of the noise generated by the Kaneohe Bay Marine Corps Base. At first, the organizers said that some community issues were outside of the scope of the Sentinel Site Program, however, as we attempted to meet, the meeting was repeatedly interrupted by the loud sounds of military aircrafts above. The aircrafts were so loud, that we literally had to stop the meeting for minute at a time to let them fly over. This made clear that it would be impossible to speak about environmental challenges that NOAA wanted to focus on, without addressing the social-historical context of the community within which they were hoping to work.
This research and participating in many meetings is that no work in and with communities can happen until this foundation has been laid. There is a naivety the comes with privilege to think that one can enter into a meeting in a community that is not their own and assume that they will be trusted.

This intentional practice of diffusing power by providing space for opportunities to communicate values frameworks and intentions, those things that were often nestled within the desire to speak about how one lives their life, are critical components of food justice work. They become even more important when meetings include extra-organizational stakeholders, partner organizations, and people from the community who will be impacted by an organization’s work. My expectations and desires to “get work done” ignored the need of community-based organizations to build a sense of community first. Only then, can the trust necessary for collaboration exist. Demonstrating how the epistemological and political practice of positionality “allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see,” the anti-racist work foregrounding the food justice movement allows participants to take responsibility for their privilege and its impact, and a skill set that is cultivated such that this privilege and power can be ‘put in check’ and diffused (Haraway 1988, 583 emphasis added).

For almost all of the organizations I interviewed, providing a structure for reflexive and engaged communication was critical to running their organizations' internal processes (how meetings were run, decisions were voted upon, plans were implemented). Developing an organizational structure that can mitigate power differentials conditions the possibility for deep listening and the equal exchange of knowledge and expertise. New communication practices also inform organizational outreach and the navigation of differences that exist among staff, community members, program participants, and volunteers. Community organizing, for those who have participated in the minutia of the process, involves many many meetings; as such, the content and structure of these meetings are not inconsequential. Public meetings offer new organizations the

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64 In chapter 3, I examine this practice as it exists within the alternative food justice enterprises, arguing that the non-hierarchical decision making that informs the food justice economy creates non-capitalist relations of power within businesses. These decision-making processes empower the voices of workers and dismantle intra-organizational hierarchy such that workers take ownership over their part of the project, integrating their hands-on experiences into the strategic growth plans of these enterprises.
opportunity to demonstrate how they plan to confront difference, empower participants, and mitigate privilege.

Taking seriously the foundational assumption of anti-racist training, which is that the work of antiracism *never ends*, the communication strategies central to food justice work assume that racism will inevitably manifest as groups struggle in their differences. These strategies provide a responsive toolkit, a way of navigating the uncomfortable waters that attention to difference produces. Rosalina Guillen writes, “It’s difficult to pull people out of their comfort zones. We used to pull people out of their physical comfort zones by showing them how farm-workers were living in the labor camps like organizers did in the 60s, but now it’s the emotional comfort zone: ‘Don’t call me racist, don’t call me privileged, don’t call me insensitive, because then you’re moving into my comfort zone of who I believe I am as a good person’” (Guillen, 2011, 309). Examples of anti-racist communication strategies include “straight talk,” a method of communication used in East New York Farm’s youth programs, or “deep listening” a strategy developed for People’s Grocery. Deborah Greig, Garden Program Coordinator from East New York Farms, explained the purpose of “straight-talk” to me when I visited their farm and gardens in 2012:

Deborah: I think one thing that we just try to promote with them a lot is communication and fairness, so we have a very structured system of feedback. It’s called Straight Talk…we do that within our staff and then we also do that within the youth program. So every time they get paid, they got positive and change comments for that pay period. And then there’s also opportunities for them to do that with the staff, so I feel like that just helps in terms of like general communication. And because of that, like I don’t have an issue being frank with them if I think there’s some sort of issue of – I mean, in terms of power dynamics, I’m not really – you know, I think because I’m white and I’m not from the neighborhood, like I think I can have an awareness and I can be an ally, and I do think there are limits in terms of like ways that I relate and sometimes I think that has to do with just like, you know, we all come from different cultural backgrounds.

And then I think some of that has to do with like age of the youth, and gardeners. Most of the gardeners are much older than me. So just being able to have sort of a structure where we communicate safely and openly... Similarly, in our guidelines with the youth, we really do not tolerate even jokes about race or cultures. And we’ll give you a violation for that. And we’ll talk about why to you and then have these workshops to sort of break some of that down….
Ashley: To what extent do you think that doing this sort of communication training with the youth and with your gardeners to the best of your ability helps the mission of the organization?

Deborah: I think that kind of like is our mission, is sort of creating these relationships between people who might not otherwise talk to each other; in particular, intergenerational relationships. So I think being able to create the space for that to happen as much as possible. You know, having the youth be the people selling or asking questions about gardeners or we have like a youth/adult breakfast. And, you know, trying to create all these spaces for youth and adults to interact when normally they wouldn’t. And I think a lot of the youth really change their perceptions of adults or their comfortability talking to adults and to strangers, and I think the adults to some extent. Like we’ve been trying to get better over the years of really explaining to them how we work with youth which is, you know, very like I guess leadership based. When I think a lot of folks in the neighborhood have grown up knowing a very different structure of working with youth, you know, where it’s very much like you don’t have a voice until you become an adult, you know, basically.

In the BALLE webinar, *Prosperity for All*, Nikki Henderson, executive director for the People’s Grocery in West Oakland, echoed the importance of intentional communication within organization and with the community at large. For Henderson, deep listening, listening beyond words, creates a form of responsible communication. Listening, in this formulation, involves an attunement to power, one that recognizes difference and the power one has in relation to others. Over time, such a practice cultivates the emotional and communicative intelligence that facilitate the relationships of trust necessary for just economic development:

Deep listening is a concept that is intricate in most relationships because we can’t build relationships unless we listen. We must listen beyond the words… So when it comes to the program, we try to design around that and listening beyond the words. Its a part of our program that we do call ally-ship and that program started because we noticed that there was incredible diversity between our staff, the community that we serve and our interns and volunteers; different races, different cultural backgrounds, different economic statuses. And we were having trouble mixing all of us together with intention. So we started doing all day workshops around race, class, town and privileges what we called inside impression workshops. It went into the history of historical and systemic oppression in the food system specifically to give these people a refresher course on what the dynamics are within the food system. Very recently we started doing emotional intelligence training just so that people can get familiar with how to stay in a conversation when it gets really uncomfortable and that was one of the intentional
ways that we tried to build our capacity for people who tried to listen (N. Henderson 2012).

Because the volunteer base and staff of food justice organizations can include individuals who are not members of the communities they are serving (despite the fact that hiring and volunteer solicitation are also critically engaged by food justice organizations as well), many organizations require that community members, volunteers, and organizational leadership participate in anti-racism training so that they bring a critical toolkit and the communication skills necessary to confront power in the context of their work.

Henderson continues:

How can we be in a relationship with those we don’t want to be in a relationship with? There are difficult personalities in the movement, and it was really hard for me to figure out how to interact with them… by listening, more deeply by staying in difficult conversations - those difficult personalities begot difficult conversations… It’s such a touchy subject depending on how we approached it. We have to slow down and build relationships first. People’s Grocery is now in the process of building relationships with each other and detangling some of the racial, class, color and privilege issues that we have with one another. And that includes the way that we do our programs (N. Henderson 2012).

Additionally, food justice organizations challenge the way privilege structures knowledge and information dissemination by building networks that share information and ideas horizontally. Why Hunger’s Community Learning Project is structured to do precisely that. As Lorrie Clevenger explains:

It’s kind of one of our philosophies here is that we are not the experts. We don’t go into communities and do workshops and things like that. What we do through our connections and through learning about as much as possible about different organizations and the work that they’re doing in their communities. We help them then connect to each other. For example, we have a program called the Community Learning Project which is a peer mentoring program where we are totally just support. We help facilitate a time and the space. We also provide funding for them to do site visits to go and visit each other at the prospective organizations. Then through that they learn directly from each other. We bring community experts together so they can learn directly from each other and share the challenges, successes and come up with new ways to be able to support each other in their local network. We also help support what’s happening on a national level and really starting to think about what it means to be part of the national food justice movement (OI - Clevenger 2012).
By creating space for cross-organizational exchange, and giving space for all people to articulate their visions, their critiques, and their insights into how to make food justice possible, food justice participants are empowered to activate their own knowledge set, explore, research, and report on what they know and see.

*The Politics of Food Justice Communities*

When political action emerges from a historicized understanding of institutional and structural privilege, as well as histories of empowerment and resistance, subjects critically orient themselves towards power (in its individual and institutional manifestations) and formulate new ways of affecting change.\(^65\) It creates conditions for discussing what an ethic of resistance looks like, what positional responsibilities we have, and who/what we are accountable to and accountable for. Indeed, the community that emerges in the context of food justice activism, reveals itself not as a “a static, place-based social collective but a power-laden field of social relations whose meanings, structures and frontiers are continually produced, contested, and reworked in relation to a complex range of sociopolitical attachments and antagonisms” (Gregory 1998, 11). Food justice organizations, by integrating a politics of difference into their everyday practices, produces a community that 1) prioritizes relationships and relationship-building in and across difference; 2) empowers political agents; and 3) cultivates self-sufficiency and autonomy through direct action.

The project of imagining and building community rooted in difference transforms and involves the creation of new political identities and forms of responsibility, driving participation in politics far beyond the boundaries of liberal citizenship. This community rejects the neoliberal forms of subjectivity that are ontologically fixed (where we are all the same and equal)\(^66\) and that narrow the pathways of participation to a corporatized, individualized private life and a politically monogamous relationship with the state. Opposed to the autonomous self-interested agent of the classical liberal imaginary, food justice advocates understand community, and not the self, as the necessary grounds for

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\(^65\) In chapter 4, we will explore how critical positionality has driven the development of a tactical political framework for working with the government in the context of food justice work.

\(^66\) See Joan Scott (1988).
democratic engagement and activism. Priscilla McCutcheon writes, “being an individual is a choice that does not exist for black people...justice and sustainability can only be achieved through building a self-sustaining community” (McCutcheon 2011, 193). As Joshua Sbicca echoes, “FJ is not just about individual access to food; it is about building an inclusive food community” (Sbicca 2012, 8). This alternative political imaginary, roots political subjectivity in emergent communities that are linked to historically informed identities and differences.

The forms of community cultivated in and through food justice work highlight the interdependence and connection of beings, actively confronting exploitation and oppression and yet committing, nevertheless, to working through and with the differences these relationships of power produce. Such a community, by virtue of its investment in the work of difference and its recognition of interdependence, necessarily maintains a space of openness that encourages a politics of creativity and experimentation, thus retrofitting a shared ethic of difference to complex, historically unique locales. Rachel Slocum writes:

Anti-racist practice notes how race, class and gender relations intertwine in the food system in different places that have different histories of racialization, gender relations and class struggle. These analyses might focus on land tenure, sovereignty, farm worker, food processor and food server exploitation, and/or the political economy and cultural politics of hunger and obesity (Slocum 2006, 339).

As such, the work of building communities in difference is the means through which the industrial food system is repaired, replaced, and transformed, not universally, but in a globally dis-connected, place-based particularity. As Alfonso Morales describes:

Food justice and food security are woven together by individuals and organizations who recognize the problem, reconstruct it as an opportunity, and organize around it while at the same time empowering communities in agricultural production, healthier consumption, local politics, and economic self-determination. A vision of self-sustaining, independent, yet interdependent community and local economic activity etches itself in different ways in distinct communities, not so much as resistance to industrial agriculture, but more toward establishing resilient and sustainable communities (Morales 2011, 169).

Indeed the stories of Growing Power, the SJLI, People’s Grocery, East New York Farms and Kāko’o Ōiwi, are as much about their shared commitments to working in difference
as they are about the unique histories of the people and the communities from which they emerge. Together they create a community that, although it exists in disparate locations all over the world, does not strive for or claim a universalizable singularity for itself and its subjects, but rather honors the multiplicity and diversity from which practices of solidarity and cooperation emerge.\textsuperscript{67} The site of community in food justice work, as an empty space of decision and creativity that cultivates agency within subjects to rebuild worlds, in the here and now, is thus where imaginations are (re)built through expressions and negotiations of difference held in common.

The active practice of dismantling racism is coupled with a commitment to organize in difference rather than against difference; as such, intentional antiracist relationship-building is a primary goal of food justice work. This is grounded in the acknowledged magnitude and intensity of the work, both the size and scale of the problem, and the need for as much participation as possible. Building healthy communities goes hand in hand with the building of healthy ecosystems that can grow healthy food; just like healthy food requires healthy complex soil,\textsuperscript{68} healthy communities require that kind of symbiotic diversity as well. As food justice scholar Rachel Slocum writes, “difference brings people, places and ideas together in ways that enable different future worlds” (2010, 304). Commitment to building communities of difference emerges from and sustains the anti-racist practices of food justice organizations, as communities acknowledge power and value difference, producing the open, empty space for experimentation and radical (re)design that galvanizes both critique and political action, or conscientização.

\textsuperscript{67} According to Gibson-Graham, the “community-economy,” has a similar “emptiness” that enables the experimental, open, and democratic practice of building. As such, they draw upon Jean Luc Nancy’s theory of the community, writing, “For the minimalism and emptiness of the abstract community economy, we are indebted to Jean-Luc Nancy (Nancy 1991) who theorizes the community starting from a prereflective recognition of the interdependent coexistence that is entailed in all “being” – something he calls “being-in-common” that constitutes “us all.” Recognition of economic being-in-common is a precondition for politics aimed at building and extending community economic practices. In approaching the task of signifying the community economy, however, we must keep in mind the ever-present danger that any attempt to fix a fantasy of common being (sameness), to define the community economy, to specify what it contains (and thus what it does not) closes off the space of decision and opportunity to cultivate ethical praxis. The space of decision as we have identified it is the emptiness at the center of the community economy; it constitutes the community economy as a negativity with potential to become, rather than a positivity with clear contents and outlines” (Gibson-Graham 2006b, xv fn. 7).

\textsuperscript{68} Woody Tasch writes, “Each gram of fertile soil contains hundreds of millions of bacteria and actinomycetes, hundreds of thousands of fungi and algae, and tens of thousands of protozoa, nematodes, and other microfauna. That was each gram of soil” (Tasch 2008, 25)
In his autobiography, *The Good Food Revolution*, Will Allen tells the story of Growing Power’s success by repeatedly highlighting the importance of building relationships across barriers, bringing people together to confront their differences and work through and with them. These barriers included lack of funding, which required him to put multiple mortgages on his home, discrimination from other local farmers, incidences of vandalism from local youth, and prejudices held by community members about farming. However for Allen, addressing difference through building community is the only way that the growing healthy food will make sense for the people who need it most. As Will Allen writes,

> The worms taught me. I couldn’t expect to put them in a box with inadequate resources and have them do well. They required husbandry, and they demanded the kind of attention and care you would pay to sheep and pigs. The worms also made me reflect again on what it took to improve the lives of people. You can’t place folks in the middle of a blighted neighborhood – without a strong family unity and without easy access to healthy food – and expect them to thrive. If you could create an environment in which people felt secure and healthy, though, you could provide the possibility of a better life (W. Allen and Wilson 2012, 121).

This possibility for a better life, for Allen, emerges in the tending to and the cultivation of community, and building communities in and across difference starts with relationships. The concept of relationships, as it is deployed throughout food justice organizing, is more than what emerges between two people or groups of people. It also refers to a politics of engagement with the structures of power that produce difference, and an acknowledgement of one’s positionality in relation to such structures. Just as the worms could not survive until their relationship with their environment and their access to vital resources were tended to, relationship-building in food justice work requires that we structurally locate ourselves and attend to our environment. Only then will relationships foreground new communities capable of sustaining and cultivating justice through food. Nikki Henderson explains,

> Relationships are foundational, for us they’re always the first step. Before we even start thinking about the problems in the community or rather we think about the “problem” in the community through what relationships have been broken that need to be reconstructed or healed. It’s not just about that people don’t have access to healthy food; it’s what has that lack of access to healthy food – how has that impacted families in the community. This causes People’s Grocery to work on social networks and social capitals and a lot of research on that and looking at
the breakdown of social networks since the 1960’s. There is a lot of data on the fact that people used to get things for free that they now have to pay for. Neighbors used to drop off casseroles and things for the family. Neighbors used to have brought food in general when there was a new neighbor in town. People used to feed each other’s kids, and those kinds of networks have been breaking down the last few decades and it’s making social networks harder. So we try to do as best we can directly. We try to look at relationships both for authenticity and integrity, they’re hard work. They take work, this is because building relationships is just—one of those things where if we have a project idea or a program idea and we start to try to figure out what our blow-by-blow is going to be in the program planning. We always take at least three months to build relationships first in the community (N. Henderson 2012).

Like the soil-lovers who speak of the importance of healthy humus for healthy food, food justice organizations not only want to do good work; the health of the organization is always in direct conversation with the health of the communities and the constituents they serve. Consequently, the challenges that food justice organizations face are often a direct reflection of the challenges that their communities face – the organization then seeks to act like the earth worm, cultivating and complicating the health of the soil by absorbing these toxins, breaking them down, and eliminating their harmful impacts. The soil, the people, the community, the organization all heal and grow together. In effect food justice organizations work from within communities, building relationships that extend far beyond the organization itself, and endure beyond the stated mission and tasks of the organization. Rather, they form new networks for survival that are resilient and allow communities to de-link from the industrial food system. Will Allen writes:

In order to build a new food system, we’re going to need a world without fences. We all have a responsibility to work together. We need everyone at the table. We’re going to need black and white, young and old, rich and poor. We’re going to need university folks who can study and foster new organic techniques. We’re going to need politicians who can help create an easier political environment and public space for a local food system. We need entrepreneurs who can create niche food products and graphic designers who can create packaging. We’re going to need planners who design inner city neighborhoods with the idea of food security in mind. We’re going to need educators and nutritionists who teach people the benefits of healthy food. We’re going to need architects who can retrofit old warehouses and greenhouses to the new purpose of growing food. We need contractors. Composters. Dieticians. Not least, we’re going to need a new generation of farmers (W. Allen and Wilson 2012).
The alternative to the industrial food system built through food justice work is resilient because of the ways in which it rejects specialization and homogenization. Allen continues:

All of these innovations at growing power came from relationships. I could not grow my compost without companies that were willing to provide their organization’s waste to me. The work of creating renewable energy required me to develop lasting partnerships with utilities and machine companies. I did not have a market for my products without building a reliable customer base at restaurants, cooperatives, and farmers markets through the city. Industrial farming has disrupted these kinds of relationships, and it has torn the fabric of communities (W. Allen and Wilson 2012, 222–223).

The communities built through food justice work can withstand these crises of neoliberalism (climate change, peak oil, peak soil, financial melt-downs, etc) because of the commitment to cultivating difference breeds a plurality of knowledges and thus adaptability. People are not dependent upon one supply chain, one employer, one farm, one crop, or one corporation. Rather, they create decentralized networks that fortify resiliency through relationships of trust. Food justice work thus requires identifying and building upon a community’s assets, broadly construed. This includes valuing alternative forms of knowledge, and the lives and people who possess that knowledge: teachers, parents, professionals, tradesmen, youth, the elderly, and the unemployed. It also requires identifying institutions and spaces that already that the community already feels ownership over (i.e. churches, schools, community kitchens, public housing projects, and parks). As Nikki Henderson highlights, social capital, often already existing in communities in ways that are untapped and unleveraged for food system purposes, is key in the development of sustainable relationships with and in community and making sure that food justice work is actually working for communities.

East New York Farms, for example, operates out of a larger community center established in the 1960s to provide services like health care, community gathering space and childcare. Building off of a strong network of community gardens, the farm program

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69 Examining different community responses to the 2012 super storm Sandy, the Atlantic argues: “As cities prepare for climate change in earnest, they’re going to need to harden infrastructure, change building patterns, and overhaul government emergency procedures. But they’re also going to have to put a greater value on the human connections that can be found in walkable neighborhoods where people know each other and support local businesses. It’s not just about quality of life. It’s about survival” (Goodyear 2013).
was developed to provide market programs for these gardeners and train youth in the importance of this work for the future health of their community. Greig explains:

East New York has over sixty community gardens which is more than most of their neighborhoods in New York City... We have a lot of experienced gardeners. We matched that with a youth component, leveraging their skills and knowledge to address food access issues that are in the neighborhoods. So they started with like a couple of gardeners selling extra produce on the side of the street and youth going out and helping those gardeners grow food. And today what we look like is we have sort of three major components with a budget aside and issues that support that. So there's our youth program which is thirty-three teenagers around thirteen to seventeen and they work at our garden, our farm.

They sell at our farmer's market and they go out to the community that we work with to help those gardeners grow more food. And we do leadership development with them. The second component is our gardener assistance so that's been a major part of my job, which is to work with some of the 60 gardens in the neighborhood. We gave some sort of support to at least 25 of those gardens this past year (2012).

By building upon these spaces, tapping into already existing networks of power and knowledge, collective agency is cultivated. In the context of formulating a theory of black feminist thought, Patricia Hill Collins argues that agency emerges through the formation of new spaces that produce new political subjectivities; “Black female spheres of influence constitute potential sanctuaries where individual black women and men are nurtured in order to confront oppressive social institutions” (1991, 223). Food justice work, particularly when it involves the production of new spaces within communities, whether it is farms, community kitchens, educational spaces, community gardens or cooperatively run marketplaces, should be understood as potential sanctuaries nurturing subjects in order to empower them to confront larger structures of power. This transformation of social identities, through the formation of counter-public spaces, cultivates new modes of attention and inattention, new ways of seeing the world and new senses of responsibility, both to oneself and others. From these spaces, new forms of exchange, (which include verbal and economic exchange) produce new subjects and new collective identities. As Michael Warner writes, “A counterpublic, against the backdrop of the public sphere, enables a horizon of opinion and exchange…[T]his subordinate status does not simple reflect identities formed elsewhere; participation in such a public is
one of the ways by which its members’ identities are formed and transformed” (Ferguson 2010, 196). As will be explored in Chapter 4, how these new spaces are intentionally cultivated figure centrally in the formation of new subjects and new economies, “the process of forming collective identities is not only key to our understanding of how and why people collectively act; it is also a critical axis of conflict in struggles between people, the state, and capital” (Gregory 1998, 14). During my travels to visit the actual site locations of food justice organizations, I experienced the profound reorientation that emerges when these organizations reclaim and transform spaces within communities. In 2011, I visited the People’s Grocery California Hotel, on a Food Justice tour of West Oakland organized by Food First and Mandela Marketplace.

Henderson described the role of this project:

The California Hotel is a single room occupancy low-income housing structure that is in the heart of West Oakland. It has capacity for 200 and only thirty-five or so live there now because the building is so under code. When People’s Grocery was asked to come in there was a garden, three years ago. The backyard, it was full of car batteries and syringes and all kinds of stuff and so we came in and we cleaned up of course and put in a green house, raised eggs – chickens, apples, products, farm-a-culture; pretty much anything we could think of. And that space is not meant to be a production space. We’re not trying to feed large numbers of people with that space. That space is exclusively to build relationships, which has also been a little… it’s a subtlety that actually makes our garden space different than a lot of other “urban farming” enterprises, that are actually trying to increase food access and bring people food. We don’t grow that much in that space. There are so many different things going on there that our production has actually lessened because of the way that we’re using the space. So we have quarterly festivals and weekly garden events, it’s that how-to in which we grow community
and we find that, that is really important and people can enter however they like. It really, really is a great step toward inclusion for us (N. Henderson 2012).

The value of the space like the one built at the California Hotel, both as I experienced it and as it is described by Henderson, goes beyond feeding people food; it feeds people with empowerment, a sense of inclusion, ownership, and pride. This speaks to the power that the spaces created by food justice work, like the California Hotel, or Growing Power, or the gardens of the Social Justice Learning Institute and East New York Farms. These spaces interrupt and reorganize the sensibilities of urban space through which empowered political actors are grown and transformed. Located, as they often are, in “toxic,” “deserted” and “abandoned” spaces of the industrial inner-city foodscape, these urban food spaces are political; they render the relationships of the industrial food system visible through the contrasts they produce: green vs. brown, fresh vs. fast, alive vs. dead. They also carve out the opportunities for agency and resistance, creating new spaces for community gathering that ignite the political possibilities inherent in the city. According to Amin and Thrift, inhabitants of the city can escape the lines of power that define its hegemonic orderings in three interrelated ways:

First, through providing space-times where practices of power either do not reach, or are heavily contested. Second, through providing sensory registers that practices of power do not have much purchase on. And third, through stimulating practices of the imagination and fantasy that quite literally escape dominant orders (2002, 106).

Urban farming and gardening, by re-distributing the ways in which both cities and food are understood, cultivate new ways of partaking in radical sensoriums, reframing “the way in which practices, manners of being and modes of feeling and saying are interwoven in a commonsense” (Ranciere 2006). Abandoned, forgotten lots become gardens, food deserts become productive food commons. Notions of agency are reframed as the land, food, and ecosystem emerge as actants, “as that which has efficacy, can do things, has sufficient coherence to make a difference, produce effects, [and] can alter the course of events” (Bennett 2010, viii). From these spaces, which hold the physical space for diverse and creative exchange, communities begin the tasks of organization envisioning and planning, imagining and enacting the alternative future worlds that they have the ability to cultivate and participate in. Such was the task at hand during the
Beloved Communities\textsuperscript{70} exercise that concluded GFJI’s Dismantling Racism workshop at Growing Power.

In this exercise, we broke into small groups and began by simply imagining - imagining a world where our communities were fed, where people had dignity. We outlined the values that would govern decision-making, communication, and relationships, and visually represented this on large pieces of blank paper. We asked each other how these values would change the look, feel, and experience of life’s most basic necessities? How would people eat? What would streets look like? Housing? Where would people work? As we drew representations of our beloved community, we engaged our sense of fear and doubt. Was this even possible? Could we create something “others couldn’t help but love”?\textsuperscript{71} As we presented our representations to other groups, fear was met with hope. We found ourselves not speaking about what could be, but what already existed in our lives: those spaces and projects we were already a part of, already building, and how they provided us with a model for what could be. The power in the exercise was precisely taking the time to imagine and believe that such a world was possible and that it had already existed.

Shuttling between the past that shapes and the future that is being forced open through daily activism and hard work, food justice organizations provide the material conditions for a new form of political agency; a future “for us, by us,” rooted in self-sufficiency, autonomy, and the resiliency of relationships built in difference (McCutcheon 2011). Just as agency makes autonomy seem possible, autonomy breeds agency. The two are mutually reinforcing.\textsuperscript{72} Central to the notion of community and

\textsuperscript{70} The practice of envisioning and enacting communities is not unique to the food justice movement; rather the practice of thinking towards a ‘beloved’ community traces back to the work of Martin Luther King, and the necessity to build cross-cultural, cross-race coalitions in order to fight for civil rights. Imagining beloved communities, however, with an eye towards dismantling racism in the here and now, stresses again that the future is mapped with an eye towards the ever present pasts of trauma, abuse, neglect, and disenfranchisement experienced by communities who have been structurally oppressed throughout American history.

\textsuperscript{71} Jonathon Schell, in his 2003 book, \textit{The Unconquerable World}, examines themes in major non-violent revolutions of the twentieth century. He concludes that the foundational power driving the success of people to overcome oppressive state regimes, “begins with the capacity to create or discover something.. that other people cannot help but love” (2003, 230).

\textsuperscript{72} Autonomy is not just a theme in the food justice movement; it is also practiced in the context of the global movement of movements against neoliberal globalization. Autonomy intentionally empowers local organizing and self-determination, recognizing and cultivating forms of resistance whereby meaning and a sense of empowerment is related to the social formations and modes of productions within which that
Empowerment, are concepts of self-sufficiency, self-reliance, and self-authorship. Empowerment comes when communities solve their own problems on their own terms. As Will Allen writes, “I wanted to provide affordable alternatives to junk food in inner-city communities. I knew that providing access to healthy food was not a solution in itself. It was one step of many in offering people a chance to heal themselves” (W. Allen and Wilson 2012, 145). Addressing complex community needs and desires, food justice work cultivates a sense of “communal responsibility” (McCutcheon 2011, 190), rooting the social relations of economic and political practices in the material conditions necessary for survival. Food, in this work, not only as a means to address hunger, it is a tool of empowerment (McCutcheon 2011, 177; Sbicca 2012, 6). If power structures communities through controlling access to resources necessary for survival, then it follows that by de-linking from those corporate controlled supply chains, by creating a self-sustaining, community-rooted supply of food in ways that make sense for unique places and cultures, communities are empowered to look beyond neoliberalism and this industrial food system. Describing the work of Black Nationalist Religious organizations engaging in food justice projects, Priscilla McCutcheon writes, “Their work around food and health reflects the desire to build this [black] community on earth. This community is not simply reactionary, but is a community that must be built based on the specific needs and desires of blacks. There is agency among blacks in this formation of community through food” (McCutcheon 2011, 192). This focus on recognizing and (re)creating communities and the material conditions necessary for survival creates the conditions of possibility for better and more effective organizing, as communities attain an autonomy rooted in material self-sufficiency, and this self-reliance is the basis for ‘true progress’ (Ibid, 194). Henderson echoes this, explaining that “building that power back is part of resistance takes place. These movements understand their relationship to power and one another through this lens. Take, for example, the thousands of localized political entities and individuals that belong to and thus create Peoples’ Global Action (“Peoples Global Action - PGA” n.d.). Emerging out of the Zapatistas Encuentro in Chiapas in 1996, which called for the creation of an “intercontinental network of resistance, recognizing differences and acknowledging similarities…a network of communication among all out struggles and resistances, against neoliberalism and for humanity,” the PGA links struggles together in order to strengthen their impact: for communication, coordination, and for building alternatives (Kingsnorth 2004, 73). The PGA represents one of the ways in which the globality of the anti-globalization movements is predicated on a radically different political order than the ‘global economy’ and the modern nation-state. This is a political order of decentralization and autonomy (See also Mertes 2004; Notes from Nowhere (Organization) 2003).
communities being more self-sufficient and helps communities figure out how to build their own prosperity and not always need to have other build it for them” (2012); as does Derek Steele of the SJLI:

A huge part of our work is empowerment… It's about working with community members, finding out what is missing, what they feel like is missing, and empowering them to be the ones that actually create that change... What do we do to make this what it needs to be so that we can solve the issue that you saw as a community member, right. So empowerment is the core of it all, like there's no reason for us to try to do it all on our own. We're empowering community members to come in and tell us what they feel like are the issues. We can help them brainstorm, help them plan around it strategically and together put all the pieces that are needed to be put together to move forward in those assets (OI - Steele 2012).

Coupled with cultivating a community of empowered actors, is a commitment to actualizing change directly through the creation of concrete, materially rooted alternatives to the industrial food system. For example, Jason Sbicca describing People’s Grocery writes, “PG views charity as private individual acts such as donating cans of food to houses of worship or giving monetary contributions to an emergency food shelter. Both forms of charity share the important limitation of failing to address structural inequalities or respond to consequences of the agrifood system without seeking to change the underlying causes.” (Sbicca 2012, 7). As a result, the People’s Grocery seeks to equip communities with the ability to feed themselves, articulating a model for economic and political action that empowers and gives communities a sense of dignity. Nikki Henderson explains:

The grub box is a community support for agriculture program that distributed boxes of food every week to families that had difficulty affording healthy food. And we were trying to figure out exactly how folks could afford the kinds of food we were distributing. We were thinking about, in terms of power… people having agency to actually assist each other in a way that was not patronizing. So we came up with a subsidized box where, the box cost eighteen dollars and “sponsors” pay twenty-four dollars for the box and residents pay twelve dollars for the box. So six dollars went to subsidizing the price of the box for a family in West Oakland who couldn’t afford an eighteen-dollar box, and we tried to develop ways that residents and sponsors of the box could interact with each other in a way that was filled with gratitude (N. Henderson 2012).
Although I explore tactical engagements with the state in Chapter 5, and the way these engagements can contribute to building just food systems, food justice organizations primarily effect change through projects and not policy. Operating through a network of grassroots organizations that rely upon one another for inspiration, resources, and support, the ‘empty space’ of food justice is creatively enacted. Direct action, as an integral part of cultivating empowered actors who imagine themselves as agents capable of effecting change and building alternatives, suggests that building community is micro-political action with the potential for macro-political transformation. For example, describing the business operations and history of the Compost Cab, a mobile compost hauling service in Washington, D.C., Will Allen contrasts the work of this community based, socially minded enterprises with the work of Capitol Hill:

With the large subscriber base, Jeremy has been able to hire a young man in his twenties, Alec Brown, to do most of the pickups. He offers him a salary of $30,000 a year. By creating one job in the middle of an economic downturn, Jeremy has done more than many of the politicians in Washington… “When I was on the Hill, we did amazing things,” Alec said. We passed the health care bill. We reformed Wallstreet. Yet we never saw the effects of these things. Whereas this… this is different. This compost pile is turning into dirt. One some level, I think I was tired of the macro. I wanted to do the micro” (W. Allen and Wilson 2012, 230–231).

This is not to suggest that food justice organizations do not see the need to engage the macro-political and economic structures that frame their world (as we will explore in the Chapters 4 and 5), rather what I am arguing is that the first step to resisting these structures is understanding one’s positionality, and then building empowered communities from [t]here. Self-sufficiency, as a value-driven organizational action within food justice movements, also demonstrates how critical positionality drives innovation. Insofar as neoliberalism is productive of states of dependency rooted in the alienating processes of commodification, such that the industrial food system and its emergency food counterpart are where we must eat, work, shop, and live, alternatives require that activists understand how and where this system works. Coupling academic critique and the situated knowledge of those who are most negatively impacted by the neoliberal model of economic growth, food justice organizations develop models of change that can
enable precisely what neoliberalism denies: a belief that history has not ended, that change is possible, and that all people can live in dignity.

This dissertation argues that the political and economic worlds that emerge from food justice work starkly contrast and pose direct challenges to the neoliberal order. In the place of singularity there is plurality; instead of dependence there is autonomy; instead of representation there is direct action; instead of crisis there is resiliency. Gibson Graham argue that in order to cultivate a politics of collective action that can create real, viable alternatives to neoliberalism, we need a historically informed expansive vision of what is possible: “A careful analysis of what can be drawn upon to begin the building process, the courage to make a realistic assessment of what might stand in the way of success, and the decision to go forward with a mixture of creative disrespect and protective caution” (Gibson-Graham 2006a, xxxvi).

Within the food justice movement, expanding perceptions of possibility requires recognition of the historical injustices that have hitherto prevented oppressed peoples from maintaining their own food self-sufficiency and autonomy. This structural exclusion from the neoliberal order has meant a history without ownership of land and resources, a lack of access to educational institutions, and a lack of access to capital for the growth and development of black, indigenous, or immigrant owned enterprises. Disrupting the hegemonic construction of expertise and the valorization of knowledge, food justice organizations politicize the epistemologies of neo-liberalism while simultaneously creating alternatives to it. This work not only “offers a more adequate, richer, better account of the world” for communities and organizational networks, but encourages a “critical, reflexive relation to… [the] practices of domination and the unequal parts of privilege and oppression that make up all positions” (Haraway 1988, 579). In other words, by destabilizing history and expertise in a more generalized, community context, practices of critical historiography produce and are produced by a critical-positional consciousness. Food justice organizations demonstrate that an alternative political economy can only emerge from intentional work in difference. Invested in cultivating the deep diversity that is required for healthy communities, the soil within which food justice is sewn begets a radically different future world upon which new economies and new politics are grown.
Chapter 4: New Economies

“We have to find a new form of economy, an economy that knows how to govern its limits, an economy that respects nature and acts at the service of man, a situation where political and humanistic choices govern the economy and not the other way around. We have to discover new economic relationships that respect the pace of nature…To begin to reorient capital away from endless cycles of consumption and a relentless focus on markets, towards a new economy that’s focus is on quality and human relationships, on our relationships to one another and to the land.”
Carlo Petrini, Preface to *Inquiries into the Nature of Slow Money*

Kākoʻo ʻŌiwi is a non-profit devoted to the restoration of coastal wetlands, indigenous agriculture, and Hawaiian cultural practices. Their signature project is Māhuahua ‘Ai o Hoi, where, after two years of strategic planning, organizational development, community outreach, establishing organizational partnerships, and extensive kūpuna mapping workshops, they had begun to markedly transform the 400 acres they managed. Having volunteered for the project since 2011, and joining in an official research capacity in May of 2012, I watched as they began to markedly transform the land, turning acre after acre from California grass to small lo‘i, or ponds where they were growing a variety of wetland taro. Every month, I would arrive at their community workday to find more and more of the acreage cleared, prepared, and planted. The energy of productivity was in the air. Community members who regularly attended the community workdays acknowledged the progress and expressed pride in their participation and in the growth of the organization. Yet behind the scenes, the project’s viability hung in the balance. By November, payroll was being fronted by the organization’s leadership, as they waited on a check from the Office of Hawaiian Affairs. The organization’s lead farmer, who was largely credited with the phenomenal progress over the past 6 months, would be asked to take an unpaid leave, while the organization searched for and secured new funding.

Located in the suburb of Kaneohe, in the ahupua‘a of He‘eia, Māhuahua ‘Ai o Hoi represents an alternative to the increasing development and urbanization of agricultural lands on the fringes of the Kapolei-Honolulu-Hawai‘i Kai corridor. As the story is told during the first hour of each community workday, the community elders who
founded Kākoʻo ʻŌiwi had a long history of defending this space from such an urban vision – fighting off a nuclear power plant in the seventies, and preventing the channelization of the ahupuaa’s stream system and transforming the wetlands into a dredged commercial marina. The space and the act of growing kalo there has longstanding cultural significance for the Hawaiians in the community; the story of the rats of ʻIoleka’a, tumbling to their death as they tried to climb over the shear cliffs of the Koʻolaus in search of food, reminds us of the importance of knowing where you come from and how to enter into places that are not your own; the foiled escape of Meheanu from her abusive husband, and her continued presence as a guardian moʻo in the marsh, inspires courage and the duty to maintain the land and protect the spirits residing there; and the story of hāloa, the first, still-born son of Wākea and Hoʻohōkūkalani, from whose grave would grow the first kalo plant, cared for by his younger brother in order to feed his people, expressed the multi-generational and genealogical connectivity of Hawaiian to land, food, kalo, and each other.

By obtaining a 37-year lease on the land from the State of Hawaiʻi, and securing permits to grow kalo in designated wetlands, Kākoʻo ʻŌiwi laid the foundation for a holistic, Hawaiian-centered approach to food security and food sovereignty. By strengthening the supply of this culturally significant food source, returning Hawaiians to their position as land and resource managers, creating jobs for local people in areas of food and conservation, and sharing and perpetuating the cultural knowledge necessary, so that such project could continue and expand in perpetuity, the project offered an alternative to the discourses of local food that were considered “haole” and “naïve.” The Board of Kākoʻo ʻŌiwi is made up of several long-time community members and kūpuna, whose memories guide the ‘restoration’ of the place. A dream-team manages the project.73 Kanekoa Shultz, a longtime native Hawaiian activist working for the Nature

73 In the landmark small business book, The E-myth, Michael Gerber differentiates between the 3 personalities necessary to run a small business (1995). First is the Technician, that person whose skills are necessary for the business’s product or service. This is the pie-maker to the pie-shop; the cook to the restaurant; the accountant to the accounting firm. Next is the entrepreneur, that visionary subject who can see the infinite potential of a business and a brand; the entrepreneur is constantly connecting the business into the marketplace, developing new plans and programs, and helping to push the business’s potential in radically unchartered directions. The final personality is the manager, that person capable of developing the systems necessary to transform an idea, and skill, into a replicable reality not dependent upon any one person, but on ideas, potential, and replicable tasks. Gerber here takes on the Fordist vision of production. The key to profitability, for Gerber, is this systematization such that no business requires the life and death
Conservancy, is the Executive Director. His out-of-the-box thinking would leverage several initial funding streams that had never been devoted to a project of this kind: conservation dollars to food security; education dollars to farming; funds for cultural restoration to economic development. Shultz actively prioritizes the importance of Hawaiian Culture and the visions of the kūpuna in making this project a reality. The kūpuna’s desire to see an economically revived He‘eia shapes the organization’s emphasis on cultural regeneration and their commitment to creating food security through the creation of jobs for local people. Shultz is also the consummate entrepreneur, bringing visions for revenue generation and operational self-sufficiency to a project officially categorized as a 501c3. His right hand woman, Jan Yoshioka, a MBA formerly working for Chevron, continually transforms Shultz’s visions into a reality through her business acumen, careful planning, attention to budgets, and a willingness to work long hours to crank out the grants the project currently needs to fully fund its vision. For all of these reasons Kāko‘o ʻŌiwi was a media darling. Yet in reality, they struggled to make means and ends meet: to create, manage, and maintain a project that was capable of participating meaningfully in community-centered development and covering its basic costs. In this struggle, Kāko‘o ʻŌiwi is not alone.

The financial challenges facing contemporary food justice organizations are rooted in the structural and ideological dynamics of neoliberalism: the homogenization of economic subjects, hierarchical relationships of exploitation, the prioritization of profit above all else, the commodification of resources and labor, and the consequential dependency of people on markets and when markets fail, their dependency on charity. As neoliberal financial markets disproportionately channel investment towards big business, and thus in the case of food system work, corporate agribusiness, communities are stripped of the capital necessary to build alternative, local and community food systems. This lack of access to capital leaves food justice organizations dependent upon grants for funding and, as I will argue below, this non-profit system maintains the structural relationships and subjective processes of neoliberalism largely intact.

of the technician. Rather, it is the manager who breaks down the tasks of the technician such that the technician is replicable. Although there are fundamental problems retrofitting Gerber’s vision into a community economy like those built through food justice work, I find the relationship between these three personality types helpful in developing a team for project execution. In this way, Koa and Jan are the perfect partners.
This chapter explores the struggle of food justice organizations to attain and maintain economic viability; it argues that it is the critical positionality of organizational leadership, staff, and volunteers that has driven the invention of a hybrid, non-capitalist marketplace for social entrepreneurialism and community focused economic growth. Food Justice organizations strive to 1) create resilient economic enterprises that employ local people and provide goods and services to underserved communities; 2) sustain a profit but not maximize profit at all costs; 3) build an organization with a defined purpose that is not swayed by the fair-weather interests of funders; 4) build relationships of trust across difference such that the voices of community are integral to organizational development and strategic planning; 5) work in harmony with natural resources and the environment; and 6) create a culture of community-based worker-ownership.

What has emerged from the work of food justice organization is a new discourse and practice of economic development and self-determination that issues strong challenges to corporate capitalism, new forms of economic subjectivities, and a prototype for a post-capitalist food system that values community, people, labor, and culture. It is a form of economic activism that hybridizes the possibility of capitalism, attempting to eschew the exploitative relations underpinning neoliberalism. By building entrepreneurial capacity to compliment and extend the skills-sets communities already possess, creating new markets built on relationships of trust and dignity, and by providing the necessary access to capital through alternative funding mechanisms, food justice organizations are not just growing healthier people, they are growing healthy entrepreneurs, laborers, owners, and writing new economic relationships and thus new economies. These new economic and political subjectivities produce new ways of thinking about value, productivity, needs, satisfaction, labor, work, exchange, in ways that reflect the historical and cultural specificities of their communities. Taken together, the economic strategies of food justice organizations suggest that they are developing new economic institutions, relationships, and structures through their decisions “that more closely model the vision of the society its trying to build” (Incite! Women of Color Against Violence 2006, 10).
Neoliberal Finance and the Non-profit Industrial Complex

As described in the introduction, non-profit and charitable non-governmental organizations are a permanent feature of the global economy. The majority of food justice organizations are NGOs, sustaining themselves through multiple revenue streams, including, but not restricted, to non-profit foundations. Food justice organizations must therefore negotiate both the free-market industrial food economy and a non-profit industrial complex that similarly reinforces the structural dynamics of contemporary global capitalism. In this section we will begin by examining the economic context of alternative agrifood projects - how both the private financial market and the non-profit marketplace create significant structural and ideological challenges for food justice organizations, both the means and the ends of their work. Understanding these challenges will help to make sense of the political/economic imaginaries of food justice organizations and the strategies and tactics they deploy in their pursuit of community-based economic development.

Lack of community access to capital, whether in the form of non-profit grants or traditional market financing, is a primary barrier to actualizing the entrepreneurial, alternative socio-economic visions created embedded within food justice organizations (Ahmadi 2011, 155). Capital is required within food justice organizations for a variety of reasons, beyond the administrative overhead associated with running any organization. Land, processing facilities, distribution vehicles, and spaces for food preparation and sale are all expensive, capital-intensive components of this kind of work.

The industrial food system is made possible by a financial system that facilitates its capital and technologically intensive production and consumption practices. These capital markets are organized around the ethos of continual growth, profit maximization, and risk reduction, facilitating the agglomeration and corporatization of the food system (J. R. Kloppenburg 2004, 31). As Woody Tasch writes:

The premise is this: the problems we face with respect to soil fertility, biodiversity, food quality, and local economies are not primarily problems of technology. They are problems of finance. In a financial system organized to optimize the efficient use of capital, we should not be surprised to end up with cheapened food, millions of acres of GMO corn, billions of food miles, dying Main Streets, kids who think food comes from supermarkets, and obesity epidemics side by side with persistent hunger (Tasch 2008, xvii).
Beyond the ways in which the dominant financial system supports corporate agribusiness, industrial agriculture receives overwhelming governmental support in the form of subsidies, research, infrastructure. As Will Allen explains,

> The honest truth is that with urban agriculture, we are not there yet. We have not made it reliably profitable. I think we can though. I see my own work as a long continuum. Every industry needs investment in basic research. The industrial agricultural system in this country has been sustained only through billions of annual subsidies and the government’s historical investment in irrigation systems and technology suited to large-scale farming (W. Allen and Wilson 2012, 226–227).

The hesitancy to re-organize the state’s funding to support local and small-scale farming is rooted in the community’s distrust in the state and hierarchical, top-down, trickle-down, economic development. Further, the work is only sustainable when the impact is felt – something that policy, and the policy process, does not seem to immediately offer.

The neoliberal financial market systematically privileges corporate and industrial agribusiness. Financing, largely delivered through mega banks and funded by deposits, retirement accounts, and the stock market, both produces and accelerates the industrial food system’s patterns of accumulation and agglomeration. For example, of the $150 trillion in wealth in the US, $30 trillion of these assets are liquid (held in the form of stocks, bonds, mutual funds, pension funds, and life insurance funds). Although it is worth exploring how we invest in illiquid assets: buildings, property, etc., it is our liquid assets that primarily serve as the life-force in a business driven economy. This means that when Americans invest, we largely invest in Wall Street and, with few exceptions, Wall Street funds large corporations. These corporations are less profitable, employ fewer people, and have little to no interest in the long-term health of our economies, our families, our food system, and our environment (Achbar et al. 2004; Korten 1995). In an era of Big Business and Corporate Globalization, it is important that we remember that small businesses remain the backbone of the American economy. There are between 25 million and 27 million small businesses in the US. They account for sixty to eighty percent of all U.S. jobs. In Hawai‘i, there are over 115,000 small businesses, the majority of which are micro-enterprises. Micro-enterprises are super small businesses, employing less that 10 people and bringing in less than $250,000 a year in revenue. However, these small businesses (the small and the very small) account for 96.5% of all employers in the
state. Were the $30 trillion available for investment in the US allocated according to impact, and investment shifted to the locally owned small businesses that keep Hawai‘i’s people employed, than more than $15 trillion would be available to grow a small business economy in the USA (Shuman 2012) This is the kind of economy we are going to need to build a resilient local food system.

Given the inability of most small businesses to access capital, many of the communities interested in starting small food enterprises that will serve their community cannot do so through traditional market-based means. This disadvantage is only exacerbated when we consider the structural privilege of whiteness in the neoliberal marketplace, and government-secured funding for agriculture and food, insofar as food justice organizations are primarily run by communities of color. Food justice organizations thus turn to non-profit fundraising mechanisms as a means through which to secure funding for their work. As a result, however, it is impossible to understand the relationship food justice organizations have with the neoliberal economy, and their efforts to create an alternative, unless we examine the role non-profits play in the neoliberal order, and the ways in which neoliberal power structures are reproduced within and through non-profit work, philanthropy, and charity.

As neoliberal austerity drains public coffers, non-profits and NGOs are delivering services no longer provided by governments. Funded largely through the network of major foundations heavily invested in the stock market and set up by the estates of wealthy individuals, families, and corporations, these NGOs often reinforce rather than challenge the neoliberal economy (Hardt and Negri 2000; Incite! Women of Color Against Violence 2006). Foundations serve as tax shelters that effectively drain the public coffers and keep funds under the control of the corporate elite. Christine Ahn argues “Foundations are theoretically a correction for the ills of capitalism…[however] when wealthy people create foundations, they’re exempt from paying taxes on their wealth. Thus, foundations essentially rob the public of monies that should be owed to them and give back very little of what is taken in lost taxes” (Incite! Women of Color Against Violence 2007, 9). As tax havens for corporate profits and corporate heirs, foundations and the non-profits they fund are as dependent upon exploitation as the corporations doing the exploiting. Most of these foundations are further embedded within
the capitalist marketplace because their funds are tied up in corporate-dominated financial markets, and these financial markets, as we have already explained, structurally privilege corporate capitalism over local, community-based economies.

As a result of this fundamental conservatism, non-profit organizations and non-profit work is molded by the socio-economic imaginaries of their funders, forming what critics term the “non-profit industrial complex” (Incite! Women of Color Against Violence 2007).74 The organizations funded by foundations rarely challenge the racist, sexist, and colonial power relations that undergird contemporary neoliberal capitalism; rather they often serve as an extension of these power relations, “cooling-out” community-driven politics by diverting energy through discriminatory funding requirements that support reform rather than radical structural change (Arnove 1982; Incite! Women of Color Against Violence 2007). Funding is directed away from social organizing and non-profits are locked into providing the kinds of programs that reflect the visions of funders and not their community needs. As King and Osayande write, “The ultimate danger for Black radical movements and other people of color initiated movements is that they become misdirected and eventually co-opted by a white left agenda that capitulates in the face of capitalist wealth, thus derailing and subjugating their progressive agendas for real social change” (2007, 87).

Race figures into how foundations acquire funds and how these funders then imagine whom their funds should benefit and how their funds should work. The majority of philanthropic trustees and board members, those who have the final say in funding decisions, are white businessmen who are also personally tied into and dependent upon the capitalist system: “With few exceptions, foundation trustees are extensions of American banks, brokerage houses, law firms, universities, and businesses… foundation boards are almost entirely composed of business men, whose aims are to steer the foundation’s assets toward growth for its own sake and to support the capitalist system

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74 Quoting Dylan Rodriguez, INCITE defines the non-profit industrial complex as “a set of symbolic relationships that link political and financial technologies of state and owning class control with surveillance over public political ideology, including and especially emergent progressive and leftist social movements…The NPIC functions as an alibi that allows government to make war, expand punishment, and proliferate market economies under the veil of partnership between public and private sectors” (2007, 8–9). Particularly for the purposes of this dissertation, I am particularly interested in the argument that NGOs participate in the rollout of neoliberal reforms and what “wiggle room” exists within the NPIC for food justice organizations to make use of foundation funding.
that board members and their fellow elites benefit from” (Ahn 2007, 67–69). This reduces the amount of money foundations pay out (the law only requires they pay out 5%); much of which simply goes towards supporting the administrative burden of the foundation itself. 75 The projects funded by the non-profit industrial complex thus reflect the positionality of the individuals that govern them. For example, “Only 1.9 percent of all grant dollars in 2002 were designated for Black/African Americans; 1.1 percent for Latina/os; 2.9 percent for the disabled; 1 percent for the homeless; 0.1 percent for single parents; and 0.1 percent for gays and lesbians” (Ahn 2007, 68). It sets up a system where white people serve as brokers and gatekeepers for the money that communities of color need to do the work they need to do. This is true both for progressive philanthropy and those charitable organizations that work on the right:

As the status quo is maintained within a white supremacist framework, the white left continues to benefit from their white privilege and relative proximity to the wealth of the right (who are the white Left’s rich relatives, lovers, good friends, associates, or fellow white privileged person on the street). When the white Left accepts donations of white capital on behalf of oppressed people of color, they act as brokers between the capital and the oppressed people of color who were exploited to create it” (T. L. King and Osayande 2007, 80–81).

Given their lack of diversity in voices and life experiences, the recommendations and visions of change of contemporary foundations often echoes power relations of neoliberal development. Derek Steel explains:

In fact personally speaking there is a disconnect in how funding goes in the first place, right, because it would make sense if the ideas and the needs were included. The food justice groups who were actually on the ground and telling them what needs to get funded instead of the funders telling you what you need to do to be funded. That's a privilege issue, right. We live in a privileged society where the haves are always trying to impose on the lives of the have-nots and tell them what they need to do. We're on the ground, we're the ones who are actually working with the people on the ground. We know what the issues are here in our own community you know in a way that anybody who's on the outside would never understand (OI - Steele 2012).

75 “For the past several years, the progressive philanthropy movement has focused on increasing private foundations’ annual ‘payout’ rate by one percentage point (from five-percent to six-percent) and preventing foundations from inclusion their administrative costs in their payout to non-profits” (T. L. King and Osayande 2007, 80)
Given the relative ignorance and lack of intimate life experiences within the communities that non-profit work traditionally serves, foundation grants are rife with requirements that make no sense within the contexts where the work is being performed. From who is hired, and their commitment to funding projects and not process,\textsuperscript{76} to the unrealistic deadlines for ‘deliverables,’ these requirements prevent non-profit organizations funded through foundation grants from having long-term impacts on their communities. This of course brings us back to Kāko’o ʻŌiwi and the experiences of the program directors at SJLI, Growing Power, People’s Grocery, East New York Farms, and UEPI. Each organization expressed extreme frustration with the process of non-profit fundraising. Although each made it clear that without this fundraising their programs would not exist, the grant restrictions, timelines, and reporting requirements often worked against the mission of the organization that the funding was supposed to help the organization carry out. Rosa Romero explains:

The way that the nonprofit system is set up is that you have to kind of change your program, even though you might have a strategic plan of what you want to do as an organization, if a grant comes out and says we want you to do this, I think there’s a tenant for nonprofits to change what their plan is to meet the grant, and I think nonprofits are just kind of getting set up with that, especially as foundations – every five years are changing their direction. So an example would be like the California Endowment here. They were funding a lot of really great organizations in L.A., and then they redid their master plan to only specifically focus on specific zip codes, and so that screwed up a lot of nonprofits and I think that people are starting to do a lot more economic enterprise kind of doing (OI - Romero 2012).

Describing the work of SPIRIT (Sisters in Portland Impacting Real Issues Together), former executive director describes the impact project-based grants have on new non-profits:

Often applying for grants from foundations resulted in our taking on additional work as required by guidelines that were not always reflective of our internal priorities. The decision to pursue funding despite the less-than-perfect match was a necessary means of “staying open” to continue our work. Unfortunately, it also required us to overextend ourselves to do both the work we envisioned and the work we had assumed now as grantees (Perez, Amara 2007, 91).

\textsuperscript{76} By process, I mean those capacity-building exercises that equip communities with the antiracist communication and organizational strategies that foreground and enable a politics and economics rooted in community differences: See Chapter 1.
When projects, and the staff these projects fund, are dependent upon on two to three year grant cycles, and when hiring requirements restrict who can be hired to complete a project (restrictions often include minimum educational credentials which can especially problematic in food justice work, which equally values life experience and educational experience), grants create project-dependent employment contracts and not jobs/careers:

The non-profit structure is predicated on a corporate structure and hierarchy that rewards “bourgeois credentials”…The non profit model makes it easier for young economically privileged people just coming out of college to start a non-profit than to engage in long-term established movements; the model is obsessed with institution building rather than organizing; and it forces social justice activists to become more accountable to funders than to our communities (T. L. King and Osayande 2007, 83)

There is a broad-spectrum agreement within the food justice movement that community work cannot be underpaid if it is going to provide sufficient competition to the industrial marketplace:

Limited wages is a very big deal with us. We don't want to create good work for crappy pay. We didn't want to do that because it's pointless. You know if you can go to McDonalds and make more money than that you would working for an organization like ours…it kind of makes it counterproductive. So that's why the sustainability element was a very huge part in it. And also funding – or when you create jobs in a nonprofit it's different than it is when you create jobs in a for-profit. When you create jobs in a nonprofit and you're receiving funding from different things, especially if you're receiving restricted funds, there's only certain things that you can do or certain jobs that you can have and so many people that can be a part of it, right. But when you have the other side of the house that actually can create jobs as it grows, you know there you have it (OI - Steele 2012).

Because so many of the foundation-grants are for projects and not capacity building, organizations undergoing the important internal process work for dismantling racism, facilitation, and communication, cannot receiving funds to sustain organizational operations and staffing while this work is being undertaken.77 Similarly, when grants

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77 The justification for the restrictions that funders have on capacity building and engagement phases of new non-profits is that in this “start-up” phase, the organization should be driven by volunteer commitment. Relying upon volunteers, however, to do the “process” and “capacity” training, however, often excludes the
require that food and farming organizations develop to the point of reliable revenue
generation or project-management in a short period of time, they are often asking those
organizations to focus primarily on their economic activity at the expense of the work
they need to be doing to root their work in communities. However when growing food is
held equally to growing community, these kinds of requirements directly prevent food
justice organizations from doing the work they need to do.

During the formation of the Hawai‘i Food Policy Council, we faced the need to
cater to grantors at the expense of our internal work, ultimately delaying the ability of the
organization to serve in its capacity as a Food Policy Council (FPC). Our first large
grant was to put on a community conference on the purpose and intent of FPCs in
creating better health outcomes for communities. Conference organizing took up the vast
majority of the board’s time, leaving many of the individuals originally interested in
participating in the council disaffected. It also prevented us from moving forward on
writing by-laws and finalizing our charter, so that we actually had no official organization
to integrate people into and tell community stakeholders how to work with. As a result,
the organization’s membership and its governing board dissolved, molted, and
transformed several times. There was a sense, among the organizational leadership, that
naturally we needed money to establish ourselves and fund our work, and yet we didn’t
quite have a sense of who we were as an organization or what exactly we wanted to do.
However, funding for community engagement, outreach, and relationship building is
basically impossible to come by or it is frowned upon in the reporting and feedback
process. Nikki Henderson explains:

We always take at least three months to build relationships first in the community.
That is what tends to be the most difficult for our grantors and lenders to get
because it looks like we’re not doing anything. But what we say that we’re doing


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78 Part of the difficulty in establishing a food policy council, as we will explore at length in chapter 5, is
that food policy councils often structurally reflect the communities and the size of the constituencies the
serve. So the Oakland Food Policy Council (non-hierarchical decision making structure independent of city
government) looks very different from the LA Food Policy Council (hierarchical, representative structures
of decision making, embedded in city government, funded through city budget). In order for our
organization to determine what the structure of the Hawai‘i Food Policy Council would look like, and how
this structure could appropriately attend to the diversity of the community that it would serve, our strategic
planning and capacity building had to attend to mapping and capturing that diversity – something that was,
unfortunately, un-fundable.
is actually trying to figure out what is there in terms of people and relationships because that’s what drives our plan. And I think five times out of ten, the plan will change completely (N. Henderson 2012).

Food justice work rejects the timelines of grants, advancing through praxis, an alternative temporality for community-based economic development rooted in relationships and an attention to difference. Clevenger continues:

> We are having those kinds of conversations with people to help funders understand the needs of actual grassroots organizations and the fact is that you can’t just give money to a specific project that you have certain expectations for without really understanding the need of that community and what it’s actually going to take for them. The amount of time and I think the pieces they really miss out a lot on is the effort that it takes to build trust within communities and so we see that as part of our role but it’s honestly a delicate conversation (OI - Clevenger 2012).

As a part of the process of identifying and challenging relationships of power in the economy, and understanding the positional advantages and disadvantages of organizers working in the area of food justice, food justice organizations have increasingly called for revolutionizing the nature of foundations and grant-making. Food justice organizations work directly with foundations so that they see the value of capacity building and community engagement and the important role it plays in building sustainable organizations rooted in and reflective of the communities they are serving. Lorrie Clevenger explains this tension as it has emerged for the organizations participating in the Community Learning Project:

> Maneuvering the web of funders and grants is part of the support we provide through the community-learning project. The process really involves us sitting down with these groups and with the funder, talking about what they’re interested in doing, what they need, how long it’s going to take, and really trying to translate that so that the funder gets some ideas. Like okay, this is not something that you’re going to be able to do overnight. This is actually a project that’s going to take five years and the first three years is just going to be relationship and trust building for that to happen. And then they would actually be able to start up the apprentices and have three, four new farmers farming on their own plot of land and doing things like that so really having everybody at the table and talking about what needs to happen for the real work to get done (OI - Clevenger 2012).

In summary, the dominant culture of philanthropy and the structure of neoliberal finance create significant challenges for food justice organizations. Their responses to these
challenges distinguish them from more mainstream agrifood activism that might not problematize market or grant dependency and ground their economic and political praxis in critical positionality. Both the market and the non-profit industrial complex create conditions whereby the transformative potential of food justice work is potentially redirected or co-opted. The practice of critical positionality thus involves understanding how privilege operates through the structures of non-profit organizations and the foundations they are dependent upon. As such, organizers are asking foundations, and particularly those privileged subjects who sit on foundation boards to understand the “gate keeping” role they play in food justice work. 79 As food justice organizations struggle against the requirements of non-profit fundraising, and the negative role that such organizations have played in their communities, they are developing new strategies for organizational and community self-sufficiency that increasingly involve moving away from grant-funded work. As a result of the critical engagement of food justice organizations with foundations, funders are starting to shift how and who they fund. Food justice organizations are also actively cultivating new relationships between non-profits and across food system sectors to create greater project resilience through socially and economically integrated network building. While some caution against the utility of foundation reform, I understand the calls for change that are emerging out of food justice work as attempts by food justice organizations to leverage short-term wins within the structures of the non-profit industrial complex and the neoliberal economy while also, and perhaps more importantly, actively cultivating an alternative food system rooted in communities of difference. This reflects the critical and nimble potential of organizations that understand the structural limitations of change within the system, and yet do not want to abandon the tools and opportunities available therein.

Organizations like Kāko‘o ʻŌiwi do not frame their choices totally or dogmatically. Rather they serve as a paradigmatic example of a tactical economic agent in their ability to navigate the complex web of personal relationships, and the diverse

79 While attending a Dismantling Racism workshop at Growing Power, a female, African-American member of the Detroit Food Policy Council asked the white women of the workshop to understand themselves as gatekeepers. Her argument was that white women disproportionately participate in “charity” work and serve on the boards of non-profits and foundations, thus having the power to fund or not fund food justice project. By understanding their location within the landscape of power, she asked that they use this power to empower organizations with an explicit attention to race and the food system.
institutional logics and languages, in order to secure the necessary funding, support, and knowledge for the implementation of their vision. Understanding foundation funding as *one funding stream among many*; these funds are often used to hold together and sustain a hybrid organization, with holistic goals and values, while sustainable revenue streams are established. The food justice movement demonstrates that these limitations need not be an irresolvable obstacle for community organizations; rather, across the movement you see very conscious engagement with non-profit funding structures and the capacity to engage it tactically, while building alternative community-rooted economies.

Food justice organizations are carving out a space to think beyond the limitations of both the industrial food system (and the neoliberal financial order that underpins it) as well as the non-profit industrial complex. Many recognize the ways in which traditional financial markets and the non-profit industrial complex stack the cards against transformative social change. At the edge of this critique, we have the opportunity to look beyond neoliberalism, but we lack the language, the courage, and the creativity to see what could happen in the spaces between, the spaces of possibility, and the worlds that exist therein. What follows is my attempt to *go beyond* a critique of neoliberalism by weaving a non-capitalist narrative, with non-capitalist actions and non-capitalist subjects *into* the story being told about the food justice movement. This is a story common among critiques of alternative agrifood movements more generally that allege food justice organizations to be “caving-in” to the pressures of the market, or being co-opted or cooled by the foundations that fund them.\(^\text{80}\) By focusing on the beyond-neoliberalism or post-capitalist question (Gibson-Graham 2006a), we can write a story that is honest in addressing the shortcomings and challenges of food justice work, and yet hopeful in its interpretation - re-interpreting actions, behaviors, and choices in order to demonstrate that capitalism need not restrict how we understand ourselves and our interpretations of the world. I am also making the bold claim that simply because these organizations might

\(^{80}\) I recently attended a paper presentation at the Association of American Geographers Annual Conference where a white, male professor presented his analysis of the food justice organizations working within a small, post-industrial city in upstate New York. His analysis of these organizations was that their pursuit of profit made them “neo-liberal” and that their willingness to change the project’s purpose to receive grant funds suggested that they were compromising their original mission or integrity. When I queried whether or not small community oriented organizations might not be exactly the model of neoliberal economics, even if they did pursue a profit, he seemed puzzled by the suggestion that there were shades of grey when it came to entrepreneurial organizations.
actively seek to cultivate entrepreneurs and small businesses, this does not mean that food justice projects are succumbing to the pressures of neoliberalism and privatizing change. A localized economy built upon small businesses, cooperatives, and the cultivation of a commons is not a neoliberal economy, even if it shares some of neoliberalism’s actions and values: self-sufficiency, revenue generation, etc. What I hope I have demonstrated thus far is that these values, when they emerge out of a practice of critical positionality, equip subjects and communities to build something radically different. Further, critical positionality enables tactical engagement with the system, particularly through alternative fundraising, financing and, as we will explore in chapter 5, policy work. Although this brings them into an institutional and ideological sphere of influence, it does not mean that these organizations or individuals are wholly colonized.

Food justice organizations like SJLI, MAʻO Farms, and Growing Power are intentionally developing hybrid financial structures, turning away from a strict non-profit models in their organizational design and development/fundraising plans and towards social entrepreneurship. Social enterprises propose that business models can be used to solve social problems and unleash the creative potential of individuals to pursue their own ideas and solutions (Bornstein and Davis 2010). They put people and planet on an equal plane with profit when navigating their business decisions and calculating their bottom line. Ed Kenney, Executive Chef and owner of Town Restaurant in Honolulu, offers the following definition for a social enterprise:

The whole social enterprise model is really just a reflection of balance. It’s not one-sided heavy towards success being a measure of net profit. You're looking at the role business plays in the community and in cultural matters and in ecological and economic. So our whole business – I think the true essence of a social enterprise is balance and if you go – I mean if you look at the social leg of the three-legged stool that includes family, family traditions, community, spiritual (OI - Kenney 2013).

Social entrepreneurialism shares the values of autonomy, community attentiveness, place-based innovation, and decentralization that are common among food justice organizations. They understand transformative change as happening from the ground up, and in ways that are adaptive to ever changing conditions and able reflect the unique and diverse desires and needs of the communities where they are located. Only this model of
horizontalized change can truly provide an alternative to the neoliberal marketplace of goods and services.

MA’O Farms and Town Restaurant are model social enterprises on the island of Oahu, collaborating to provide a farm-to-table network for the community to tap into and support. Both understand the social entrepreneurial model as the condition of their businesses’ success and a part of their long-term vision on how to impact change for Hawai‘i’s people and the food system that feeds and employs them. Gary Maunakea-Forth founded MA’O Farms with his wife Kukui Maunakea-Forth. Having both participated in conversations about the importance of healthy food, agriculture, and economic development they imagined a community-based project that could serve the needs of Waianae by integrating these themes. For MA’O, forming a social enterprise was integral to their ability to participate in community-centered development:

We were frustrated with what was going on in our community. Having participated in a long series of conversations with our families, friends, and colleagues, and pulling from our experiences growing up, we knew that we wanted to create something more than a non-profit. We wanted to create a sustainable mechanism for community economic development…Development in Hawai‘i is always justified because it creates jobs. Land and resources are taken in the name of jobs. We knew that in order to effectively combat that kind of development, we were going to have to create jobs too. We always knew we wanted it to involve youth and job training. We knew we wanted it to do with food.

But the first thing we did, before doing a lengthy envisioning of the social justice components of the project, was actually write a business plan. So many issue-based social justice non-profits fail because they don't have a sustainable model for their own growth and revenue generation. We wanted to be free to work on our own timelines and do what best fit the vision of the project. Having spent time in finance, I was familiar with the practice. We interviewed folks who knew about the food industry and asked Kokua market about the kinds of produce they were importing and we were like, wow, this could really work.

In 2004, Gary would meet an up-and-coming chef, Ed Kenney. Inspired by his muse, Alice Waters, Ed was beginning to develop his own brand of cooking, sourcing his ingredients as locally as possible. Meeting Gary through mutual friends, he began practicing his “open-back-door” policy that drives the innovativeness of his menu and its daily variability. Kenney explains:
At the beginning MAʻO was just growing greens. There was some citrus planted on the perimeter and bananas but pretty much it was greens. But they were open to working with us. So we suggested, “How about leeks? How about beets?” And I remember the first day when Gary and Kukui used to actually deliver in those days. They would walk in with a box and, “We’ve got beets.” And they were so stoked and I opened the box and there was one beet in their box. And I was like, “Dang” but they were so stoked I couldn’t cut them down for it. We make a point to make use of everything that comes in.

We still to this day, anything that anybody brings to the back door we buy, whether it’s someone that harvests from their garden or MAʻO. With that one beet I remember vividly I ran a beet-risotto special for lunch that day. And I just took that one, put it in the juicer, and it yielded half-a-cup of beet juice. And I could put a few drops in an order of risotto and it would turn the risotto bright pink. And I chopped up chard and beet and chard and put it in the risotto. So it was MAʻO Beet-Risotto and it was truly MAʻO beet.

For Kenney, creating a restaurant model that supports farmers and understands themselves as co-producers means that he not only “takes what he can get” from farmers and gardeners, but that he approaches his role in the food system holistically. This is the orientation toward business engendered by the triple bottom line, people-plant-profit approach to business:

We encourage our farmers to push the envelope and grow whatever. It’s interesting because I know restaurants in town that mandate to MAʻO or other farmers that they want their arugula no more than two inches high. They want the root still on. But for, I know that an arugula plant is two inches one week, the same rotation will be three inches or four inches the next week. So I don’t feel like I’m doing our farmers any service or being a true co-producer if I impose too much of my parameters on them. So whatever comes in we buy it and I think that’s really our biggest thing we have for our co-producers, that we’re here to support them by buying their produce.

I have had conversations with some of our livestock farmers about antibiotics and hormone use in the feed. And work with them to transition off of what they may be using, grass fed versus green finished. But at the same time I don’t – many of these people have been doing it this way for many generations and the last thing they need is some young chef – I’m not young I guess, some old chef telling them that this isn't the way you should do it (OI - Kenney 2013).

Town and MAʻO not only demonstrate the power of closed-loop, place-based sourcing, but the extent to which relationship building is integral to the success of the social
entrepreneurial business model. Kenney now sits on the Board at MAʻO and the relationship with MAʻO is integral to Town’s brand. For Gary, creating close relationships with a broad range of markets and distributors enables social enterprises like MAʻO to ensure financial viability:

Today’s farms need to be able to capitalize on all possible revenue streams. Grants. Mainstream grocery stores. Natural/Hippy food stores. CSAs. Schools. Farms should be looking across the market and spreading out their revenue sources because one day we’re going to face competition, it is going to be more difficult, and we can’t just rely on one kind of customer.

Within food justice organizations, social entrepreneurialism provides a framework for revenue generation, which in turn allows organizations to fundraise for capital and continued operational expenses without asking for “donations” from community members who might not have the money to spare, or without taking on the obligations that come with traditional grant writing. Some food justice organizations maintain a 501c3 tax category but abandon or move away from grant funding as the primary source of revenue; others are forming B-Corps and/or affiliated LLCs that are partially subsidized through the organization’s grant-making activities but also capable of developing for-profit projects and programs. By developing alternative business models to grow and sustain their own organizations, these businesses demonstrate how critical positionality can drive alternative, community-based economic development. By creating small businesses, by encouraging ownership, food justice organizations suggest that a non-capitalist entrepreneurialism is a means toward a just food system.

Although often fraught with challenges and difficulties, most of which are rooted in the very systems they seek to resist or transform, I understand the social-entrepreneurial trends within food justice organizations as a mechanism through which the means of food justice work reflect the transformative ends the movement seeks. Food Justice organizations often straddle the non-profit, for-profit tax category, working towards the creation of economic entities that can pursue socially valuable goals while at

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81 According to the B-Corporation website, “B Corp certification is to sustainable business what Fair Trade certification is to coffee or USDA Organic certification is to milk. B Corps are certified by the nonprofit B Lab to meet rigorous standards of social and environmental performance, accountability, and transparency. Today, there is a growing community of more than 600 Certified B Corps from 15 countries and 60 industries working together toward 1 unifying goal: to redefine success in business” (B Lab 2013).
the same time generating revenue and having access to capital restricted only to for-profit entities. For-profit structures are understood to provide more freedom and ‘wiggle room’ for organizations:

Derek: But in creating the sustainability in it we also had to create a for profit part of the business that we're doing too that has the jobs of the farm manager for the larger spaces that we're going to actually have…

Ashley: Why structure it for profit?

Derek: It's a combination of both, right. So there's an entity called B corporations or benefit corporations, corporations that are built that are philanthropic in nature so they have a partner that is socially responsible and all of their profit or some of their profit goes to taking care of that social responsibility. So we built a business entity that is a benefit corp that actually kicks back the money to take care of the workings of the nonprofit as far as the garden work is concerned. Why we did that is because you know in America private industry has some – the public world has a little bit more constraints than the private world does.

And so you get a little bit more freedom of things you can do with a for profit business that you wouldn't necessarily have with your nonprofit. But if you work in tandem, you know put the two together and you're working in tandem, there's a lot that you can cover, a lot of ground that you can cover, a lot of things you can do when you have a force like that together so it's like a hybrid (OI - Steele 2012).

This “freedom” does not suggest that food justice organizations are gradually learning to tow the line of the neo-liberal market; rather their commitment to their own constitutive, structural hybridity reflects their capacity to maneuver the structures and regulations of neoliberalism in ways that benefit their organization and their community. Taking advantage of the de-regulated private marketplace when necessary, tax categories are simply relations to be negotiated.

Community organizations often diversify their income streams and build on the assets and strengths at their disposal. Referring to Lynchburg Grows, Allen explains this commitment:

Dereck is working hard to make his organization less dependent on grant money. “We’re up to at least three days of sustainability out of a week,” Dereck says, meaning that at least three of every seven days are financed internally from selling food or services. Lynchburg Grows has been creative in trying to cover four more days. The organization recently rented one of their greenhouses to a local congregation. The church grows two tons of fresh food there annually for its
soup kitchens, which feed fresh greens to a clientele who have often come to expect donated canned food and stale bread. Lynchburg Grows has also converted one of their extra greenhouses into an event hall for weddings. I hope Dereck can make Lynchburg Grows sustainable seven days out of seven, but I don’t see the harm if he doesn’t. His non-profit can coexist with for-profit ventures like Jeremy’s Compost Can. His organization is supported by the donations and volunteer hours of people who want to better their community and who know that there are values more important than money” (W. Allen and Wilson 2012, 234–235).

**Critical Micro-financing**

In a bit of a chicken and egg scenario, the rise of social enterprises rooted in holistic conceptualizations of food, personal/community empowerment, and justice are driving and being driven by the concomitant emergence of *slow money* and *patient capital*, investment processes and financial markets which seek to match the holistic framework of these organizations with a holistic, meta-economic framework for business development and community-focused economic growth. Woody Tasch writes:

> A “patient capital” marketplace is emerging to better serve such companies, since most are not easy candidates for the same dollars that are seeking the next Google. Patient capital does not exist yet as an organized or disciplined asset class; it is the gestalt that emerges as socially responsible investing matures and as the wave of triple bottom line entrepreneurs and investors builds (Tasch 2008, 43).

One patient capital trend that addresses the barriers to capital that food justice organizations and social enterprises often face is critical micro-financing. The kind of financing that emerges when organizations situate themselves at the nexus of industrial food and attention to structural oppression is fundamentally different from the neo-liberal financial system. Again, in food justice financing we see the values of critical community-building and an emphasis on relationships, self-sufficiency, and autonomy –

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82 As we enter into a conversation of the alternative economic practices that reflect the political and economic imaginaries of food justice activism, the explicit connection to/ or identification with food justice becomes less common. Particularly in the case of alternative financing models, while the practices exist within the larger network of alternative agrifood movements, in the case of the food justice organizations interviewed, they were not always common practices. As organizations struggle against the non-profit standard, they had not yet taken advantage of the alternative financing programs I describe in this section. Part of the participatory work of this dissertation was making the connection for myself and offering these insights and opportunities to the organizations I worked with, arguing, as I do, that the kinds of alternative economics of Slow Money and Critical Micro-financing reflect the value framework of the food justice movement, as it seeks to root organizational strategies and tactics in critical positionality.
all of which, when taken together, are in sharp distinction with the dominant economic order. In this section I explore how micro-financing secures access to capital in ways that challenge and subvert industrial food financing and how attention to difference and identity drive the practices of micro-financing organizations, consequently decentering the importance of traditional for-profit and non-profit investment.

Microfinance, proposed as a more equitable and sustainable mechanism for poverty reduction and economic development, gained popularity in 2005 when the UN declared the “Year of Microcredit” and in 2006 when Muhammed Yunus of the Bangladesh’s Grameen Bank won the Nobel Peace Prize (Yunus 2008, 2010). By providing access to basic financial services, most often in the form of microloans and microcredit, the practice was lauded for its ability to empower women, uplift entire communities, and help the poorest of the poor, presumably in juxtaposition to other forms of finance-oriented development in the third world. The effectiveness of microfinance, whether it be as a tool for female empowerment, or for helping those most marginalized in the capitalist marketplace (the homeless, the young, and the very old) was, however quickly challenged (Dichter and Harper 2007). Critics argued that 1) the debt created by micro-credit had unacknowledged social stigmas, often further marginalizing women rather than empowering them; 2) loans too often lacked the necessary education and support needed for them to be most effective; 3) they fail to bring in the complementary infrastructure for savings which has proven time and again to be a better solution to poverty than loans and credit. Further, many point to that fact that the logic of microfinance fits neatly within the larger ideologies of neoliberal development, as it places the “solution to poverty on individual initiative rather than changing global economic systems” (Incite! Women of Color Against Violence 2006, 14), enabling the ‘poor’ to realize their innate, ‘budding entrepreneurialism,’ and addressing poverty through “business development, asset accumulation, and wealth creation” (Dichter and Harper 2007).

These critiques, in conjunction with the problematic nature of contemporary grant-making, drove the emergence of new, more critically nuanced micro-financiers, some of whom are working directly in the field of food justice and alternative food entrepreneurialism. Within food justice work, microfinancing builds and sustains the
necessary infrastructure for alternative food production, processing, distribution, and marketing by providing capital to enterprises that would otherwise not qualify for loans or grants. As such, they are an integral part of the food justice movement, giving organizations the capacity to build a just alternative to the industrial food system and the neoliberal economic order. They allow organizations to maintain the equally important necessities of building community (and not just investing capital) in the process of creating new economies. This model shares the emphasis on critical positionality within more program-focused food justice work by 1) deconstructing and addressing the power dynamics of the contemporary political economy of which micro-finance plays a part; 2) intentionally investing in organizations which cultivate community-based networks vital to the success of small-food enterprises; 3) striving for community autonomy and self-reliance.

I was deep into the local food scene when Feed The Hunger (FTH) first came to town. ‘Local girl’ Denise Albano of Chinese, Filipino, and Hawaiian descent, left Hawai‘i for college and began a 15-year career running non-profit funded programs for at-risk and homeless youth in New York and the Bay Area. She came into microfinance after meeting her business partner, Patty Chang, and realizing that micro-finance could provide more sustainable poverty alleviation through the creation of social enterprises that holistically attend to community needs. Although they originally intended the project to focus on international client-needs, Albano’s connection to Hawai‘i and her understanding of Hawai‘i’s food insecurity eventually brought her home.

Now if life teaches you lessons that books never can, I was not yet ready to understand the role of finance in building local economies and rebuilding local food systems at the time that I first learned of FTH and attended their 2011 fundraiser. At this point, my own company, Baby Awearness, was still growing steadily, and had yet to hit threshold that only a capital infusion would help it overcome. It wasn’t until I searched, in vain, for a bank to give us a $10,000 credit line (a small request for a business that had grown its revenue from $9000 - $27,000/month in 2 years and employed 7 people) that I realized the importance of organizations like FTH for small enterprises in the U.S.
In its first two years operating in Hawai‘i, FTH integrated itself into the fabric of local food movements. They fiscally sponsored Green Wheel Food Hub, an organization that brought (Electronic Benefits Transfer) EBT stations to Oahu farmers markets, facilitating the use of SNAP benefits (formerly known as ‘food stamps’) on fresh, locally grown produce. They funded farmers working to break free from the industrial model of food production on the island, and in 2013 they would begin working with Kāko’o ʻŌiwi.

Microloan programs like FTH offer an alternative framework for evaluating what makes a project investment worthwhile, radically challenging the 5 C’s of lending. Rather, FTH looks to relationships of the businesses and social enterprises in need of funding and determines whether or not they have social capital available to them that could ensure their success. This might be in the form of a tight-knit community connection, the needs of that community and the capacity of the enterprise to fulfill that need, and/or their ability to tap into existing networks of support, marketing, or product distribution. Albano explains:

While you have to follow a traditional loan application process, and follow the five C’s of lending, we also make an effort to look beyond the paperwork to the people and the business. We'll go and visit you and talk to you, and get to know you. For us, the relationship is huge. If you're passionate about what you're doing, committed to what you're doing, and your work is going to have a community impact, it's all plus for us. If you don't have collateral, if you don't have a credit history, which I can tell you is about 80% of the people that we make our loans to, then we say: Are you in a distribution network? A case-management network? Are you getting other technical support? If so, that for us reduces the risks, and we'll make the loan.

Building community is thus integral to the success of microfinancing because community, rather than the individual, is the foundational economic unit that makes the international model for microfinancing so successful. Albano explains:

83 Hawai‘i is known for the unique nature of its banking sector. Absent are the huge banks you’ll find across the mainland: Chase, HSBC, Wells Fargo. In their place is an interesting fabric of seemingly local or regional banks: First Hawaiian, Bank of Hawai‘i, Central Pacific, etc. with two banks (Bank of Hawai‘i and First Hawaiian Bank) claiming roughly seventy percent of the market share. Despite the disconnection of Hawai‘i from corporate mega banks who are “too big to fail,” the concentration of wealth in FHB and BOH significantly impacts the availability of funds for loans for small businesses and social enterprises and, as I learned from personal experience, both of these banks are known for their conservative lending practices.

84 The 5 C’s of lending are: character, capacity, capital, collateral, and conditions.
The model for microfinance internationally is called group lending. So the way that works if I'm in your village and I want a loan, I have to find four other people that also want a loan. So it's a group of five. We essentially become responsible for paying each other's loans back. So if you get the first loan, you need to pay it back otherwise the other four people don't get their loan. And that works very well in cultures where people are – it's a small community, people are very aware of each other; they know that if you're successful, I'm going to be successful. You run the corner store, I'm probably going to buy from you etc. etc. That model is what does not work in the United States where people can be very individualistic (OI - Albano 2013).

The alternative lending model of social-justice oriented microfinance relies heavily on partnerships across the finance system. Networks are not just important in terms of securing the success of the loan, they also help make critical microfinancing possible and alleviate some of the administrative overhead from the micro-financier so that they can focus their time and energy on building relationships with the community they serve. In this way, the micro-financier also exhibits a critical orientation towards neo-liberal financial institutions, leveraging their capacities toward fundamentally alternative business models that the traditional marketplace would never fund. “Ninety-percent of our time is spent on networking,” explains Albano. “It isn't about making a loan because you could just do that in your sleep, right? You could hire someone, look over the paperwork. Okay, yes, no, give them the money and every month ask for a repayment. We truly network” (2013). Individuals, government agencies, and larger foundations provide funding, larger microfinancing organizations provide due diligence, and FTH administers the loans. By freeing themselves of the administrative burdens associated with due diligence practices, many of which are rooted in outdated securities laws developed in response to the Great Depression (Shuman 2012), FTH can focus primarily on building relationships with the loan recipients, identifying their needs and helping them to build projects which will produce enough revenue to fulfill their purpose and make repayments on the loan.

Further, alternative microfunding organizations like Feed The Hunger make a point to partner with local organizations that can provide necessary technical support for small business development. These networks also link loan recipients to organizations that will support their success through education and capacity-building. This is important
because many of the individuals working in and starting small food enterprises have training in farming or food preparation, but not in business management: “We have partnerships with Agribiz Incubator: they helped a lot of our people do their business plan and get ready for loans. Kohala Center on the Big Island help, again, people get financially ready for either a grant or a loan and then help them with technical support” (OI - Albano 2013). Another key partner for FTH in Hawaiʻi is Pacific Gateway Center, which offers a variety of hands-on training opportunities geared towards low-income entrepreneurs and business owners, building a curriculum that acknowledges, from the outset, that business ownership is always positionally situated, and that success depends on identifying the unique barriers owners and entrepreneurs face based upon their social location. Albano explains:

Pacific Gateway Center helps farmers who come to us for loans with case management, with translation, with distribution, with financial literacy, even legal support because a lot of these farmers were trafficked in illegally. But again, because we knew that these farmers were working with Pacific Gateway Center, I mean, no one was going to make these guys loans. They don't speak English. They don't have collateral. They don't have credit, and quite frankly their legal status is up in the air. Because of their relationship with Pacific Gateway Center, we made the loans and they're among the more successful borrowers I've found because they're such a tight community that they feel responsible for each other and failure to them is really not an option (2013).

The impact of microfinancing goes beyond providing access to capital, building community connections and capacity in order to ensure successful repayments of loans. Because loans have fundamentally different obligations and requirements than grants, and often come fewer strings attached, they can be imaginatively pedagogical. They invest in a community’s capacity to take risks, try new things, and to imagine and articulate a plan for their work in terms that do not rely, for the long term, on system-dependent funding Rather, they encourage long-term planning towards self-sufficiency:

Organizations and individuals come to us for loans all the time who are nowhere near being loan-ready. I mean, they have an idea, they have a dream. They want to do this – they're farmers and they know how to farm. But especially today, if you want to be successful, you need to have a plan, and so many of these people come to us and don't even have one. When we say business plan, we do not mean a fancy, high-gloss business plan that you have to turn into bigger organizations. We just want to see how your cash flow is going to cover your expenses, the loan, and also make money for the owners. We refer these people to people that
actually help them with their business plan and then come back to us. As painful and as difficult as that may seem, I think it helps people become more successful and sustainable in the long run and feel more confident in what they're trying to do (OI - Albano 2013).

Additionally, food justice-oriented microfinancing operations acknowledge the work they must do to appropriately understand their role in the community and translate the opportunities they can provide into terms that resonate with cultural values that can be differ radically from neo-liberal norms. Albano, for example, discussed an opportunity that came to FTH for funding the expansion for a community-run garden on Hawai’i Island. The garden sought to potentially use funds to grow production to their point where they could aggregate and sell their produce commercially. Access to capital would be an important part of this process, but it was up to Albano to translate why microlending was a better approach to funding the project:

We went to Hilo to talk to a group doing community garden and we brought a respected community elder with us because we knew that we were probably going to run into some problems... When we begin talking to them about the specific terms of the loans, “We can give you this amount, with this much interest,” they just looked at us completely blank, like “What are you talking about?” We were really trying, we really liked each other, and we really wanted to work together, but it felt like we were speaking a different language.

So when we get back in the car, the community elder says, “You know, you guys are really saying the same thing, but you're speaking a different language. You can't talk about loans. You can't talk about business. You can't talk about profit because those are words that are Western words. They mean nothing. And in fact, they are terms that they are against. But what you are offering, really, is within the tradition of kokua, which is when you have, you give to others. In return when they have, they give to others. It's just a way of helping the community, and microfinance is like that. You're giving help to someone. When they get on their feet, they return it so that you can help someone else” (OI - Albano 2013).

What the community elder offered to Albano, and what in turn drove a re-articulation of their work, is a resituating of finance and capital in a non-capitalist, non-profit oriented language and value framework. Within this framework, assets are not simply monetary; they can be land, water, relationships, and knowledge. They do not necessarily have to be commodities, privately owned and available for sale, to fit within a
community or an organization’s economic planning – whether it is in the design of a project or the evaluation of a project’s viability for investment returns. Critically positional capital investment takes difference, and the life experiences associated with living different lives, as a core value in the way it uses investment to build new economic enterprises. For example, Alfonso Morales describes the work of Regi Haslett-Morroquin, a Guatemalan immigrant who organizes other immigrants in Minnesota:

Reflecting on his experience and learning stories of other immigrants prompted Regi to initiate the Latino Enterprise Center, now the Rural Enterprise Center (REC), a program of the main-street initiative, which is a rural downtown development program in Minnesota. Regi’s impulse was both social and economic. He recognized that the immigrants laboring on farms and in processing facilities would produce more economic value if they owned their own operations. Once these operations were established, the economic benefits would reverberate through the community…The REC model assumes the immigrant is willing to take on risky business ventures, and that the immigrant’s experience is valuable to the success of that venture (2011, 166).

The work of microfinance programs like FTH thus goes beyond providing access to marginal communities outside of the dominant network of investment (only 1% of which goes to locally-owned small businesses) (Shuman 2012, xviii). Microfinance can be a part of a larger process of structural economic change that creates businesses that are investment ready, and investors who are ready, willing, and able to invest their savings locally. If Woody Tasch is right, that “[i]n our devotion to money, market, and machine, we are destroying not only the fertility of the soil, but the fertility of our imaginations” then microfinance participates in a re-imagining of our economy and the relations that underpin it (2008, 32).

New Subjects

The political, ethical, social, and philosophical problem of our day is not to try to liberate the individual from the economy…but to liberate us from both the economy and from the type of individualization that is linked to the economy. We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through a refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries. Michel Foucault, *Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, (1983).
Subjectification within neoliberalism also shapes the political imaginaries of oppositional social movements. As power structures access to resources, it shapes how political actors imagine and enact change. Through critical positionality, expressed through antiracist praxis (analysis and action)\textsuperscript{85}, food justice organizations cultivate new political and economic imaginations – with new tactics of resistance and strategies for change. Building new communities rooted in relationships of trust, values of self-sufficiency, resilience, and empowerment also liberates subjects from the forms of subjectivity and individualism through which capitalism is enacted. By building entrepreneurial capacity to compliment and extend the skills sets communities already possess, creating new markets built on relationships of trust and dignity, and by providing the necessary access to capital through alternative funding mechanisms, food justice organizations are not just growing healthier people, they are growing healthy entrepreneurs, laborers, and owners. Forging new economic relationships from their differences, they create new economies. These new economic and political subjectivities produce new ways of thinking about value, productivity, needs, satisfaction, labor, work, exchange, in ways that reflect the historical and cultural specificities of their communities.

Food justice programming focuses on offering the necessary skills and knowledge to build new economies. Technical classes identify the skills a community will need to make a community food system a reality. Building on the Do-it-yourself (DIY) ethos of self-sufficiency, food justice organizations often offer classes on gardening, farming, vermicomposting, composting, cooking, preserving, hoop house building, home aquaponics, permaculture design, etc. These skills enable communities to liberate themselves from the forms of dependency that characterize the neoliberal order. Insofar as the industrial food system is characterized by the parallel processes of dis-informing and deskilling (such that we know less about our food and how to grow/prepare it) (Jaffe and Gertler 2006), these classes create new forms of literacy for food consumers and producers, empowering them not just in the context of a project or program, but in their everyday lives.

\textsuperscript{85} As explored in Chapter 1, antiracist training involves understanding the centrality of race, gender, and colonial relations to modern day capitalism, making exploitation and profit possible.
During my time at Growing Power’s three-day workshop, *Building Community From the Ground Up*, participants had the opportunity to take a variety of hands-on classes so that they could take this knowledge home to their projects and implement ideas immediately and on their own. Antiracism and business development strategies were integrated into the skill-building curriculum. I attended the Composting/Vermiculture workshop led by Will Allen. Now one would imagine that the workshop on such a topic would entail a strict focus on the hows of composting: the carbon to nitrogen ratios, the worm to food balance, how to harvest worms, where to store compost, how to mitigate pests, etc. However this workshop started with a scenario. Allen broke the group of 30 or so into smaller groups. He asked us to imagine that we lived in a lower income neighborhood facing a crisis of diet-related health disorders, lack of access to healthy food, little to no safe public spaces, high rates of crime, with close to thirty-percent of the male population in and out of the criminal justice system. This hypothetical community also faced a crisis in education, with youth either failing or dropping out of high school with little to no prospects for quality education. What we had to offer this community was our composting and vermicasting skills. Our assignment was to leverage these skills to the benefit of our community. We sat in our small group and designed a project that reflected the work Growing Power and our own organizations were doing. When we presented these projects, Will was forceful in his critique and objections “You want a community garden? How are you going to prevent vandalism? Looting? What if people steal your equipment?”

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86 The workshops offered were: **Composting/Vermiculture**: Learn this innovative approach to sustainable crop production. Develop a comprehensive and sustainable growing system that can grow food year-round without heat! During this workshop, participants will learn hands-on how to construct and maintain a worm bin. Turn your worm castings into cash by creating a value-added product for your farm. The training also includes building indoor, small scale compost system and how to maintain outdoor, small and large scale systems.  
**Hoop House Construction**: Learn how to build a Hoop Greenhouse using innovative and cheap construction methods.  
**Intro to Aquaponics**: Learn how to build indoor fish and plant systems for food production. Participants will set up a small scale aquaponics system  
**Year-Round Greenhouse Production**: Learn the A to Z of micro-green production! In this hands-on class, we will engage in the seeding, harvesting, washing and packing of micro and leafy greens, with a follow up discussion on how to market the product. We will also touch on other year-round hoop-house and greenhouse production. This is a great way to round out your farm operation and bring in profit and food security all year-round (Growing Power 2013)
A participant responded, “We’ll ask the police to monitor the space, maybe organize a nightly watch.”

“No,” Will responded. “Your community neither respects nor wants the police in their neighborhood. What are you going to do?” Another participant chimed in, “We’ll build a fence around the project and give the community members access.”

“No. Your community is defined by gates, fences, and “No Trespassing” signs. What are you going to do? Why don’t you meet the neighbors around the garden? Help them start a plot there? Why don’t you ask them to organize neighborhood meetings? A neighborhood led watch to protect the space?”

“Yes! And we can offer classes in the garden, for families and kids, so that they feel at home there,” responded someone from the group.

Each project was met with a similar series of questions and challenges, all driving towards the same point. Your skills and ideas only matter if you situate them, understand where you are coming from and where you are working and build your project from the ground up. This model of educational programming is reflected both in Growing Power’s on-site training series, which has expanded to include a 5-week intensive Urban Agriculture Certification Program as well as a network of regional training centers across the country where Growing Power partners with regional organizations to train community members in their strategies and techniques (W. Allen and Wilson 2012, 211). In contrast to privately owned intellectual property that dominates the culture of neoliberal innovation, skill-oriented educational programming is rooted in a shared commitment to building a knowledge commons for the cultivation of just food systems. The more experimentation, the more sharing, the more retrofitting and redesign – the more these networks will nourish and sustain this culture of cooperation and collaboration.

Food justice organizations extend the impact of skill-building workshops through programming designed to encourage entrepreneurialism project design – such that the idea can turn into a socially rooted business model that employs people, creates jobs, and thus delinks community from the industrial food economy. Nikki Henderson, for example, describes People’s Grocery’s Growing Justice Institute:
The Growing Justice Institute is probably, I think, one of our biggest successes when it comes to building collective power because we’re trying to figure out a way to not just come up with great programs but to actually come up with a way for People’s Grocery to actually interact with the community such that they can develop the projects themselves. The Growing Justice Institute is a leadership development program for people in West Oakland who have an idea for a healthy food cooking class or really want to do a raw foods business or a company, anything like that. They join us for a period of two years, joining a cohort of fellows in order to design and implement programs and partnerships with. So we go to workshop series together and we learn about the political economy of foods and determinants of health. We learn about the high level concepts that they might not have a chance to interact with otherwise and then we tackle them together and address the root causes of issues of food and security in West Oakland. So we provide training support, we open up all of our networks and our social capital to them so that they can really build their businesses and projects. We’re now on our second cohort of fellows that are projects that are going to feed into a business networks of their own that we’re going to be in partnership. And that to me is one of the most successful ways we’re building power (N. Henderson 2012).

By encouraging the development of small community-based enterprises, food justice networks delink communities from the industrial food system while at the same time encouraging community-based sustainable economic development.

Food justice organizations also intentionally create conditions for working with dignity. Building on the antiracist practices that structure intra-organizational and outreach communication food justice work involves a re-narrating of the role of the workers within economic growth and development. Unlike the laborer within classic Marxist theory, a site of alienation and exploitation, food justice organizations build worker empowerment into their organizations and enterprises. Time and time again, meaningful community centered work is understood and experienced differently, suggesting that the relationships of power between worker/owner and worker/manager are fundamentally transformed in the space of the new food justice economy. Empowerment involves valuing the different knowledge sets and skills that individuals bring to the table, that, when taken together, bring strength, adaptability, and resilience to an organization. Building off this deep-seated appreciation for difference, project design often involves and evolves a broad range of community assets. Describing the work of the Rural Enterprise Center, Alfonso Morales traces the relationship between skill-
building, cultural difference and appreciation, and the subjective transformation of worker empowerment that comes through entrepreneurialism:

Here the immigrants learn the tools of the trade, as well as the variety of roles associated with different enterprises. In this way, their transformation from laborer to farmer is almost complete in that they are able to think and speak like existing farm/food processing operators about the same problems of credit and management that all farmers face. But the big difference is that they have their own experiences to reflect on and use to reconfigure operations in light of their unique resources and knowledge (Morales 2011, 167–168).

Programs like the Growing Power Urban Agriculture Certification Series and People’s Grocery’s Growing Justice Initiative develop concrete skills sets, cultivate entrepreneurialism and empower workers – producing an alternative path for economic development through which questions of ‘growth’ and ‘progress’ are measured holistically with the community, the earth, and the long-term sustainability of the project in mind. At Kākoʻo ʻŌiwi this holistic approach to strategic planning and project implementation was reflected in the non-hierarchical relationships of power between the community, the kūpuna, the organizational leadership (Jan and Koa), the organizational staff, and the community of volunteers (including local scientists) participating in the project. Although this horizontal approach to communication slowed down the “progress” of the project, and the pace of the work, it was understood by both Koa and Jan as integral to the organization’s mission. As the staff opened the loʻi, the kūpuna would weigh in on whether or not the work reflected their vision, sometimes requesting that the project move production in new areas and locations. As the leadership designed plans for moving forward with different projects, the staff would comment on its feasibility, the proposed timelines, and whether or not there were the appropriate resources available. As new loʻi tapped new water-sources and impacted the complex eco-system of the wetland, the organization was in constant communication with scientists observing the environmental impacts, expressing a willingness to completely change the program if the loʻi was not serving its originally imagined purposes: storm surge mitigation, holding back sediment, and cleaning the water for the fishpond and reefs downstream. Finally, as staff and leadership carried out visions of the kūpuna, integrating Hawaiian culture into the project and using the community workdays on the farm as a mechanism through which to educate the community on the values and histories
of this place and their practices, we (my PI, Hokulani Aikau and I) surveyed community members on this emphasis, in order to determine the “success” of this aspect of the project. Each node within this matrix, and the attention to sharing and communicating across different positions, created a system whereby the visions of the participants were valued and they were empowered to contribute. Although these feedback loops by no means work perfectly, and are also inflected with power dynamics that are hard to combat or resolve, they do suggest an alternative ethos and process whereby food justice work proceeds, and show how to put attention to dignity and empowerment into practice when forming a complex team.

Creating conditions of community dignity requires the intentional cultivation of team diversity, particularly as it targets those with disabilities or barriers to employment (age, criminal records, long phases of unemployment, substance abuse problems, etc.). An alternative food economy rooted in communities of difference then prioritizes locating and cultivating participation of all community members – again not just as recipients of aid, but as workers and owners. Sharing the story of Lynchburg Grows, an urban agricultural enterprise that works with individuals who have disabilities and special-needs, Will Allen reflects on the significance of an alternative food economy rooted in a commitment to equity and diversity: “This organization runs a farmers market that is manned by community members with both mental and physical disabilities. This work indicates how the local food movement has the potential to provide meaningful employment for people who have been shut out of the traditional workforce” (W. Allen and Wilson 2012, 234).

This commitment to community and staff empowerment is also reflected in the movement’s commitment to create good jobs. At Kāko‘o ‘Ōiwi, the kūpuna’s original visions of the space was not simply to grow food – it was to create new forms of employment for the community. Jan explains:

The kūpuna are very pragmatic – they don’t envision somebody just coming there for fun, you know, on their time off and doing it because the work of taro farming is sort of this all-encompassing thing. You need to be there in order to gain that knowledge of being able to make things work and get the taro healthy and start feeding people. So they understand that, you know, unlike 200 hundred years ago, people need jobs, they need to get paid.
The jobs created through food justice work and by food justice enterprises are understood as competing directly with the forms of employment available within the industrial food system. Challenging the often unreflective calls within the mainstream alternative agrifood movement to “return to the farm,” food justice organizations argue that in order to make that return possible, the farm is going to have to provide living wages. Workers in an alternative food economy have to be able to pay for the food they grow, distribute, prepare, and serve. Thus, building a sound enterprise within an alternative food economy that puts the wealth/health of a community on an equal plane with profit, requires that these enterprises create conditions necessary for individuals to want to buy into and work for an alternative food economy. As one of Growing Power’s urban farmers explains, “To motivate young people to be farmers now...they are going to have to see the money first. We have to be able to lay this out and say that with this amount of acreage, you can make this certain amount of money, if you follow these guidelines” (W. Allen and Wilson 2012, 226). Brahm Ahmadi echoes this sentiment, writing “Our projects may be able to make a significant contribution to nutrition. But if they can’t also make an economic contribution, how can communities sustain their advances” (Ahmadi 2011, 159). Projects endure and grow when they participate in and have ownership of the solutions to the problems that they experience. Describing the work of People’s Grocery in Oakland, Jason Sbicca captured this sentiment in his interview with a staff member:

Given the history of racial inequality around private property, an Asian female staff member expressed a desire to make sure that West Oaklanders derive benefits from changes brought by food justice activism: “there’s always a fear of gentrification...where original residents are slowly pushed out. But if you’re able to provide jobs...at the same time that you’re changing the social landscape and the physical landscape, then they have a better chance of being able to stay in the neighborhood” (Sbicca 2012, 6).

Community relations and cross-sector relationship building is the first step in the forms of economic development practiced within the food justice movement, grounding

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87 This emphasis on providing jobs challenges the culture of volunteerism that sustains many non-profit organizations. Certainly, one of the main challenges to the economic sustainability of food justice organizations, and their capacity to disrupt traditional form of privilege in who can ‘afford’ volunteer, is important. And yet even those who do not have the time and the money continue to give. They sacrifice, not for themselves but for the greater good of their communities and the role they see these projects playing in building that better community and that better economy. People take jobs that pay less money and require more time because they are experienced as having a greater value.
economic innovation in community-based relations, rather than the autonomous self-interested actors of the capitalist imaginary. Community ownership, allowing communities to “stay in the neighborhood” and participate in the solutions to the problems they experience, is thus understood as the necessary precondition for project viability and success.\textsuperscript{88} The formation of such a community economy, formed in and through collective action, thus takes as its ontological basis a being-in-common that calls forth the interdependency of all beings, human and non-human. Practicing critical positionality is not tangential to relationship-building; rather it is both a theory and a practice of understanding how oppression informs these relationships. As such, the relationships built through food justice work intend to foster trust, dignity, and respect: within business (between workers, managers, and owners); across similarly oriented businesses and organizations; and between businesses and consumers. Relationships are not just a structure or a form of engagement, they are a value within this model. Understood as such, seeking, establishing, nurturing, and sustaining relationships comes before profit and product.

Power, growth, innovation, and value are all derived from community building work as they create conditions for an alternative to neoliberalism by repairing the “fabric” of connection which the industrial food system, and the constitutive processes of commodification and profit-seeking, have torn apart.\textsuperscript{89} The metaphor of the table figures centrally as the ground of economic growth and development, insofar as resilience is built through an engagement with and a building from difference. Derek Steele explains:

And keep mind you’ve got to remember all those different people that were at the table we looked to them to partner and kind of figure out how we could work together to do this work because collaboration is a very very big deal. This work

\textsuperscript{88} Sbicca points to a concern among many food justice organizations working on community centered development that they are unintentionally participating in processes of gentrification in the urban core of major cities like Brooklyn, Oakland, and Inglewood. Holistic approaches to development could avoid this by increasing wages to match rising costs of living, however engagement in the policy process, particularly through the provisioning of affordable housing, seems a necessary counterpoint to the impact urban food projects could have on inner city neighborhoods.

\textsuperscript{89} To quote Will Allen again, “All of these innovations at Growing Power came from relationships. I could not grow my compost without companies that were willing to provide their organization’s waste to me. The work of creating renewable energy required me to develop lasting partnerships with utilities and machine companies. I did not have a market for my products without building a reliable customer base at restaurants, cooperatives, and farmers markets through the city. Industrial farming has disrupted these kinds of relationships, and it has torn the fabric of communities (W. Allen and Wilson 2012, 222–223).
can't happen until you bring all the people who were working in silos together at one table to do the work, right (OI - Steele 2012).

Relationships, built through building community, form an alternative safety net, a new marketplace for necessary goods and services, mitigating the risks associated with the capitalist economy. As Alfonso Morales describes, “The key to the REC strategy is building relationships: between people, between immigrants and their experience, their new circumstances, and between organizations. An infrastructure of supportive relationships reduces the risks and barriers to farmers entering the food and agriculture sector” (2011, 166).

As we explored in chapter 3, food justice organizations have created networks across communities and organizations to share information, educate one another, and cultivate a greater and more global sense of possibility and hope in the face of neoliberalism. These strategies for inter-organizational cooperation across difference are central features of the food justice movement, as it organizing around practices of decentralization and autonomy. Networks like Why Hunger’s Grassroots Action Network, BALLE, and GFJI provide opportunities for horizontal information exchange, challenging the culture of competition fostered by traditional non-profit funding models and the competitive capitalist marketplace. Through these networks, food justice organizations are practicing an alternative model of economic behavior that leverage organizational alignment (what in the strictly capitalist marketplace would be perceived as competition) to achieve more effective outcomes.

Since forming the Hawai‘i Food Policy Council in 2010, I have personally confronted the culture of competition among NGOs working within communities with finite funding streams. Grant dependency was certainly among the chief structural causes of this competition, insofar as it restricted what organizations were doing and how they were going to pay for it. The HFPC was met with skepticism from longtime food-oriented organizations when it received a $30,000 educational grant only 2 months into

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90 The current structure of non-profit funding “promotes a social movement culture that is non-collaborative, narrowly focused, and competitive. To retain the support of benefactors, groups must compete with each other for funding promoting only their own work, whether or not their organizing strategies are successful. This culture prevents activists from having collaborative dialogues where we can honestly share our failures as well as our successes” (Incite! Women of Color Against Violence 2006, 10).
its existence. One HFPC board member repeatedly stressed how negative this grant was for the perceptions of our work in the community of food non-profits as it suggested that we thought that we could do a better job educating people on community food systems than the organizations who had been doing this work for decades. The HFPC integrated this critique into our strategic plan for securing funding. As I travelled the country visiting projects and interviewing project managers and directors they would both acknowledge the problem as it existed, but also always emphasized that when community organizations commit to working together, new solutions, previously unimaginable, would emerge.

As such, I understand the move towards developing hybrid, social entrepreneurial funding streams as a response to the structural flaws of philanthropy, the culture of competition that it produces, and the commitment that food justice organizations have to working across difference to develop resilient, self-sufficient communities grounded in relationships of respect and trust. Grounded in an alternative ethos of co-operation, these food justice networks suggest the depravity of the capitalist lens in its boxing of these actors and actions into categories of specialization, competition and market-based exchange. Derek Steele of SJLI explains:

Mind you we use our partners and their skill sets to move forward in these things, right. Like we're not going to be the one saying, “Oh you know this is what the urban greening is like as far as trees are concerned.” We have a partner, Tree People, who does that. There's the CPDA, California Policy Development Agency in Oakland… They do advocacy training. They help with policy changes. In fact they were the ones who helped push the HEAL Initiative here in Inglewood. So if that's the work that they do, why would we not have them go ahead and do what they're doing and have them be a part of the team what we're trying to do. Again it's all working pieces man. Capacity is built by empowering people to work in their own ways but as a part of one project. So if there's 15 lanes on a 405…you pick your lane, I'm going to stay over here in my lane and let's just work together to get this done… It's working in the collective, man. Let's combine our forces and approach this grant this way, and instead of competing against each other for the same grant, let's go to that grant together and do our parts. Because like you said earlier you know when you go at certain grants and you're the only one that gets it and you don't have any partners you end up going against the grain of what the mission of your organization is because you need to get that stream of funding to come into your organization to take care of the people that work for you. We don't have to do that. We can combine our forces, we'll Voltron it out and everybody do their piece. You know somebody's
got to be the arm and somebody be the leg, somebody got to the head, you know what I mean (OI - Steele 2012).

Rosa Romero, in her capacity with the Urban Environmental Policy Institute (UEPI), describes similar strategies:

So this is a five-year grant that we’re kind of working with Hunger Action L.A. and bringing in all these different partners, so we do a lot of collaboratives – collaborative groups or collaborative grants with other organizations so we can get kind of their expertise in different areas because we don’t have a grey area, so we really try to leverage that. All of us are – most of us – our history is in grass-roots organizing in L.A., so we have a lot of those contacts already. So it’s just a matter of pulling them in for different specific projects (OI - Romero 2012).

Cooperation structures the relationships between similarly aligned market actors, both in their quest for funding and their delivering of services to communities that they are mutually invested in. This ethos of cooperation also results in the creation of shared spaces and programs that transform relationships between community members and the organizations providing these services.

For example, food justice work goes beyond recognizing that the industrial food environment structurally predisposes communities to diet-related health disorders and proposing “localization” and “access” as solutions; food justice work goes beyond the discourse of food localization and food access. By focusing on how relationships of power and to power must be directly addressed in the process of creating new and alternative marketplaces for fresh food, and by building market-places with an attunement to power and around a commitment to relationships, food justice organizations have developed and implemented different programs that democratize access to locally-grown food by obscuring the producer-consumer binary upon which capitalist market-based exchange rests. Therefore, food justice-oriented farmers markets provide reduced booth prices for farmers and gardeners seeking opportunities to sell produce, cooperative tables to further reduce producer costs, and often compliment these markets with training classes to encourage at-home and community garden-based food production. These markets do not only provide opportunities for low-income families to access fresh and healthy food, it creates opportunities for them to sell their homegrown products as well. It encourages both alternative forms of food production and
consumption simultaneously. It is not just a campaign to “know your farmer;” it's a campaign to be that farmer.

Food justice organizations create markets that intentionally provide access to consumers who are reliant upon EBT, SNAP, and WIC funds\(^{91}\) allowing non-traditional market participants to support local producers. The multiplier effects of localizing dollars is understood not only in terms of the monetary benefits, but also for the ways in which it creates new relationships of trust and responsibility between community members. East New York Farms coordinator Deborah Grieg observes the impact of the farmer’s market venue, despite the community’s longstanding tradition of home and community gardening:

So many gardeners are so generous and like give away most of their stuff to their neighbors and things like that. So we feel like we’re kind of the way that we can get that person too who isn’t getting that stuff from their neighbors or, you know, young mother who’s maybe not used to cooking stuff from the garden to try it out (2012).

New marketplaces and market mechanisms build relationships of trust and cooperation between producers and consumers. Stephanie Mutz, from Community Seafood, a community supported fishery (CSF) in Santa Barbara, California that connects residents directly to the local catch, describes the process whereby new consumers are formed through new purchasing practices:

We are now in our second season of our CSF. Our customers are having a lot of fun knowing where and how their seafood is caught, who caught it and how to prepare it. We are taking the confusion out of seafood by doing the homework for our customers, and they know they are doing their share in preserving the local marine resource while supporting local fishermen. We really are accomplishing our goal of building community when our customers start talking to each other when they pick up their seafood, and before you know it, they are inviting each other over for dinner! (Lanphier 2012).

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\(^{91}\) Over the past 5 years there has been a nationwide push to equip all farmers markets with EBT technology and increase the purchasing power of SNAP benefits through double bucking programs. According to the Farmers Market Coalition: “In the past five fiscal years, the number of farmers markets and direct marketing farmers authorized to accept SNAP has increased 360%, and 52% between 2010 and 2011 alone. According to the USDA Food and Nutrition Service Benefits Redemption Division, there were 2,445 farmers markets and individual direct marketing farmers authorized to accept SNAP, as of September 30th, 2011… Coinciding with the increase in SNAP-welcoming farmers markets, the nation saw a dramatic increase in the value of SNAP redemption at farmers markets, as more and more SNAP customers become aware of their options and choose to buy directly from farmers and food producers. Between October 1, 2010 and September 30, 2011, more than $11,725,316 in SNAP benefits were redeemed at farmers markets, increasing more than $4 million in one year” (Roper 2012).
This speaks to ways in which the phenomenological experience of these spaces profoundly reorients subjects both in their relationships to one another and their relationships with food. New consumption patterns are created through a variety of mechanisms already discussed: 1) education creates new literacies for shoppers navigating both the industrial and alternative marketplace, empowering them with the knowledge they need to eat healthy, while also translating health into new, culturally familiar forms; 2) skill building equips these consumers with the ability to use and prepare whole ingredients, those foodstuffs most likely to be grown in and by community members; 3) relationship building connects consumers to producers in ways that change budgetary behavior, such that individuals are willing to pay more for food when they know their dollars are staying local; and 4) the focus on creating better jobs provides the community with the means to afford the food they are growing.

Similarly, food justice programs have retrofitted mainstream community supported agriculture (CSA) models to better serve their communities. They have created an innovative and translatable mechanism whereby communities can “front” farmers funds by purchasing “memberships” and/or “produce-subscriptions” in advance of the growing season, mitigating the risks of farmers. Further, CSAs bring fresh food into areas where there might be few fresh food options. Food Justice CSAs offer a variety of mechanisms to ensure that the model works for all customers, regardless of income, while at the same time not undercutting the farmers and gardeners who deserve fair wages for their work. Will Allen narrates the logic of his own translation of CSA into a program that made sense for his community in Milwaukee:

In the mid-1990s, the model of community-supported agriculture, or CSA, had become increasingly popular. A typical CSA at that time involved a group of people committing their labor and capital to a single farm. In exchange for providing some workdays on the farm – and a monetary investment of several hundred dollars at the beginning of the planting season – the owner of the farm would provide weekly seasonal produce to its members during harvest season. I believed this was a promising model, but not for poor people… I began to imagine how the CSA model might be modified to make it work for people with little income. I approached the members of my Rainbow farmers Co-op… I asked the members if they would be willing to give me, at a sharp discount, the excess produce they grew. My plan was to combine these vegetables with apples and oranges and peaches that I purchased from small regional wholesalers and place
them in what I called a “Market Basket.” All the food in the basket would be food-stamp eligible…I priced the basket with twenty-pounds of fruits and vegetables at $10. The baskets could be purchased on a week-to-week basis, so families could make decisions based on their income at the time. I told farmers who worked with me that they couldn’t depend on the market structure for steady income. It could simply be an alternative source of revenue for produce that would otherwise go to waste.

The retrofitting of the CSA model not only shows the kinds of innovation evidenced in food justice organizations inter-organizational cooperation and collaboration, but it also suggests that we can create food systems that combine the values of access with dignity such that communities that lack healthy food options are not resigned to the networks of provisioning that alienate them from producers and their cultures. Indeed, through mechanisms like the garden-sourced CSA and farmers market (the CSA model at SJLI sources from community gardeners), food justice programs are expanding access to culturally appropriate foods. Cultural diversity, as a hallmark of food justice approaches to food and diet, presents health in ways that reflect the complex food traditions of different communities. Deborah Greig, in our discussion of the work of the East New York Farms gardening farmer’s market program explains the impact:

You know, the bulk of the food that I think gets sold at the market is from the farmers from upstate. But we also grow a lot of specialty crops, so we grow a lot of kind of Caribbean South Asian crops: lima beans, collard greens, 20 different kinds of hot peppers and seasoning peppers…So I’d say – I mean, the market is kind of an interesting combination of the local food chain - upstate farmers who are supporting people with bulk produce – you know, the potatoes, the onions. And then the gardeners and us; we’re really growing those crops that immigrant, migrant, and communities from the south have lost access to. You know, a lot of them are crops they don’t find in the store; or if they find them in the store, they’re low quality, definitely not organic. Those are crops that I think a lot of the farmers from upstate just aren’t used to growing. So I think it actually creates kind of good balance as we can provide those crops that people had back home that were often grown organically (2012).

Insofar as the industrial diet is defined by the increasing homogenization of tastes, flavors, and preferences, the introduction of ethnic foodstuffs into communities that are disconnected from these products through the industrialization of the food supply goes beyond providing access, to rendering food security into locally salient forms, rooting
health and access in cultural diversity and difference. Such a marketplace also transforms
the habitus of food consumption.

Commitment to worker empowerment, holistic gauges of development,
appreciation of diversity and difference, and inclusive business planning and process
capture the alternativeness of the macro-economic vision embedded within the food
justice movement. In contrast to the ‘trickle-down’ model for neoliberal development, the
values of self-sufficiency and autonomy lead food justice organization to focus on
growing fishermen. What they offer is a new paradigm and a new framework for
analyzing which projects actually work to serve communities. Critical positionality,
through antiracism and critical historiography, create new modes of awareness through
which communities are able to distinguish between the solutions that will work, and the
solutions which simply reinforce the foundational dynamics of neoliberalism and the
industrial food system. Indeed the communities where food justice work is most common
are not only struggling against the industrial food system (the encroachment of fast-food,
liquor stores, and convenience stores into their neighborhoods); they are also struggling
to defend themselves against alternatives which are similarly entrenched in the industrial,
neoliberal vision of development. It is often in this confrontation (between solutions) that
the power and desire of neoliberalism to co-opt the food movement is most evident. In a
era where ‘food projects’ are en vogue, particularly when it comes to non-profit funding,
this critical entry into the conversation about what community-based, food-focused
development is where food justice organizations have the most important role to play
(despite the pushback they often receive). By critically intervening into the dominant
discourses around alternative food, food justice organizations are calling attention to the
often unacknowledged power structures that underpin both industrial food and the
mainstream agrifood alternatives.

As organizations struggle to identify funding sources, diversify revenue streams,
educate consumers, and move towards financial solvency, while at the same time
providing concrete goods and services to communities without options, they do so with
attention to the many faces of power.\footnote{Nikki Henderson explains: “I as a young activist in college, I definitely read the critical pedagogy
cannon, Pedagogy the Oppressed; all of those books that went into how to do community organizing and I}
industrial food system and neoliberal development model as extracting wealth and labor from low-income neighborhoods in order to maximize profit for shareholders, food justice organizations reject solutions that offer food access without the necessary means to community empowerment.

For example, communities are increasingly rejecting the proposed entry of large supermarket chains into food deserts, arguing that they simply entrench communities more deeply into an industrial food economy that fails them as workers and consumers. Brahmi Ahmadi writes,

Imagine if the national answer to the food crisis took the form of a huge, publicly financed flood of corporations like Walmart and Tesco opening up stores in inner-city neighborhoods, using the exact same economic model they’re using now. We could expect low-wages, the destruction of small businesses and local economies, and all of the awful labor and supply chain practices we’re familiar with (Ahmadi 2011, 156).

A West Oakland farmers-market vendor echoes this critique: “We don’t want Safeway or Albertsons. They abandoned the inner city. They sell poison. They pay crap wages. Independent business is the most important thing” (Alkon and Norgaard 2009, 296). The rejection of corporate practices reflects a nuanced and critical analysis of capitalism, while the simultaneous openness to entrepreneurialism and market-based solutions suggests that the alternatives to capitalism need not throw the baby out with the bath water.

In 2012, I interviewed Rosa Romero, board member and longtime volunteer of South Central Farm. South Central Farm was a productive multi-plot community garden run by Latino farmers living in South Central on land that was purchased by the city from...
a private owner and then, in a back room deal, sold back to that owner for the purposes of building an industrial warehouse. The protests against the garden’s closure gained national attention, particularly as it sparked the interest of several Hollywood foodies, including Darrel Hannah and Danny Glover, and was used as a platform in the hotly contested mayoral race that would elect Antonio Villarigosa (Kennedy et al. 2009). The garden’s closure happened in the context of a fast-food moratorium in South Central, a planning strategy intended to curb the influx of fast-food retailers into poor communities. Moratoriums are often coupled with publicly-funded enticements for large supermarket chains. What this historical moment offered was the opportunity for the then nascent national food justice movement to confront two competing visions of what a “healthy” food system would look like for American inner-cities and low income communities of color. One, the vision held by the City Council members, provided corporately-funded, top-down access to “fresh-food” through industrial food channels; the other, the vision embedded within the garden and the struggle of community members fighting the closure, involved using public lands and resources for the community to feed itself. Rosa Romero recollects the impact the closure had of the food justice community in Los Angeles:

The closure of the farm brought the language of food access and language about what food justice is… At the time, Jan Perry the Counsel person in the district, had done fast-food moratorium because [South Central] had the most in LA….but then there was never a push really for bringing in fresh stuff. Her position was to bring in a supermarket, like Fresh n’ Easy, which isn’t really giving fresh fruits and vegetables to people, you know, there’s a lot of prepackaged stuff. So I think that the South Central Farm kind brought the idea that you could have a community that was growing their own food, selling their own food to the local community in a way that was very familiar to the immigrant community because that’s how you do it in Mexico. You have outdoor-like markets every week. So they kind of had a really informal farmers market… I think people just really liked the atmosphere there, the idea that people were feeding themselves and being self-sustained with healthy fruits and vegetables, because if you looked at the surrounding community, a huge obesity problem that you could actually, visibly see, but the children at this place were completely content, happy, you know, fit children. So I think people saw that dichotomy that was happening just outside the gate. So I think it really brought a lot of dialogue about that (OI - Romero 2012).
Communities engaged in food justice activism are similarly rejecting corporatized memes of urban farms attempting to co-opt the tradition and success of organizations like Growing Power. For example, in 2012, Detroit faced the publicly funded entry of corporate funded urban farming operations into the city’s urban core. Detroit, like many of the cities in the rust-belt, was characterized by extreme inequality and an inner city defined by vacancies, abandonment, foreclosures, and unemployment. Over forty square miles sits vacant. The decline of Detroit’s economy had disproportionately negative impacts on African American communities who moved north in the early twenties century only to face discrimination in the form of hiring, red-lining and de-facto segregation. As Allen and Wilson explain, “The racial and economic visions in Detroit have created two food-systems: one for the haves and one for the have-nots. More than ninety percent of food stamps in Detroit are spent at what the food researcher Mari Gallagher calls “fringe retailers”: liquor stores, party stores, gas stations, dollar stores, and the like. More than 500,000 people in the city have to travel twice as far to reach a grocery store than a fringe store” (W. Allen and Wilson 2012, 216). In response to this inequitable and unjust food system, community members in Detroit began to imagine how the “vacant lots could be repurposed for growing fresh food,” forming a coalition of organizations which included the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network (DBCFSN), with whom I participated in the Growing Power workshops within 2011 (W. Allen and Wilson 2012, 216). Headed by Malik Yakini, the DBCFSN imagines a solution to the impacts of the industrial food system on Detroit through the lens of food justice, creating community run urban farm projects that provide both food and jobs. Today, because of this grassroots community action, Detroit is known as the leader in the urban agriculture movement, boasting “1,200 community farms and gardens in roughly 138 square miles” (J. Thompson 2012). In December 2012, however, the City Council of Detroit approved the sale of 140 acres of public land, below market value, to Hantz Farms for the purposes of a for-profit urban farm. Echoing the back door dealings that characterized the closure of the South Central Farm, community members spoke out en mass about the lack of transparency in the sale process as it revealed the ways in which alternative agricultural practices can help advance a neoliberalism in the city:
Ironies abound in this struggle since the speculator proposes to use the vacant lots to create a for-profit urban farm. The grassroots campaign emphasizes the higher need of the people for their own means to feed themselves while promoting micro-enterprise opportunities to earn a little extra cash. This is clearly a case of top-down environmental renewal versus bottom-up environmental justice and self-determination. The people of Detroit have decided: They do not want low-wage jobs working for a corporate agribusiness even if it is located in the inner city. It is still a low-wage factory in the field. They want food autonomy and opportunities to build their own small businesses around the grassroots movement to remake the Motor City into the Farm City (Pena 2012).

What distinguishes the vision of organizations like DBCFSN from the Hantz farm is precisely the attention this organization plays to the intersections of positionality and food, and the ways in which attention to power as it maps onto bodies and identities must inform the solutions that are proposed to the crises produced within the neoliberal, industrial food model.

*De-Centering Neoliberalism and Creating a Post-Neoliberal Imaginary*

Etymologically, “economy” traces back to the Greek word *oikonomia*, meaning “household management” or “stewardship” of the home. Pointing to a deep relationship between a sense of belonging and place, economics in its original formation, spoke to the ways in which one creates and manages resources in order to create conditions for life and community. Today, when we speak of the economy, many imagine a global network of commodities and services defined precisely by the disconnection between their origins and their destinations. Economics, as a discipline, has been reduced to quantitative modeling that echoes this disconnection, and prescriptive statements made by the field reflect an unquestioned, steadfast commitment to growth and profit maximization. However, as the global marketplace has cut into and across communities and household, *an-Other oikonomia* remains, one that involves a deep thinking about the place that one lives, and the people and resources that sustain it. This other economy is grounded in an alternative value set that reflects the differences of the people, ecosystems, and histories that define a place. This economy cooperates, creates conditions of dignity, and empowers. This other economy persists despite the triumph of the neoliberal project. It challenges the teleology of the modern capitalist narrative, and the idea that we are all
marching towards free markets. Food justice movements are one pathway into this alternative economic narrative, space, and imaginary.

This chapter argues that the work of food justice organizations, given their focus on the critical positionality of economic and political subjects participating in the community economies these organizations are variously building, de-centers the capitalist imaginary. As such, these organizations play a central role in the growth and development of a non-capitalist present. JK Gibson-Graham argue that it is the simultaneous, global co-presence of community-minded economic projects, of which food justice organizations are a thematic sub-grouping, that empower people to think differently about the spaces around them, their agency, and the changes that are possible when capitalism is not understood to be the hegemonic organizer of everyday life. As such, it is vital that we understand that the power of these projects lies precisely in their capacity to create real, living, material alternatives to capitalism in the here and now, that are grounded in and productive of new political and economic subjectivities. They write, “if to change ourselves is to change our worlds, and if that relationship is reciprocal, then the project of history making is never a distant one, but always right here, on the borders of our sensing, thinking, feeling, moving bodies” (Gibson-Graham 2006b, xvi). By hybridizing not only our sense of the possible, but also our understanding of what is presently unfolding, the community economy project provides a framework for thinking through how we can broaden the understanding and practice of politics at the grassroots level. This is about cultivating subjects who desire and seek to enact alternative economics and worlds in their everyday life.

Gibson-Graham propose developing and deploying a language of diverse economies in order to perform these different visions and ways of managing one’s resources with an attunement to community and place (Gibson-Graham 2006b, xii). Woody Tasch reiterates this claim: “In order to consider such possibilities, we must be unafraid not only to develop new ways of measuring, but also new ways of thinking and a new language” (2008, xxvii). This chapter understands the practices of contemporary food justice organizations, and the political imaginaries framing these practices, as a new language of the economy that effectively resists neoliberalism while also building community-rooted alternatives. This language is not only spoken, but lived. In the
context of food justice work, these language includes concepts like “co-opatition,” “social entrepreneurialism,” “worker-owners,” “triple bottom-line” and “community supported agriculture,” and new performativities which enlist community members in the scripting and actualizing of their own food security rooted in self-sufficiency, resilience, and autonomy. Such a language suggests that the building blocks of a post-neoliberal food system resist the kinds of universal claims and ontologies that undergird the neoliberal present; rather, these alternative economies are enacted through a fidelity to place and a commitment to difference:

Be forewarned: Slow money is no “ism.” Slow Money is not springing full blown from the head of an economist. Rather it is a springing from a myriad of small actions taken by farmers, consumers, entrepreneurs, and investors who are asking questions that need to be asked, who are responding to questions that can no longer be adequately answered by the formulas of agricultural economics (Tasch 2008, xxiv).

Indeed the forms of resistance that are most effectively combating the material impacts of neoliberalism, the industrial food system, and neoliberal development in low income communities are not an “ism.” There is no coherent ideology framing the work, no grandly proposed globally replicable model for implementation. Rather, what we see is an assemblage of practices that, when taken and theorized together, suggest when and how transformation, autonomy, and alternatives are possible. In the framework of thinking about more just, more sustainable, more ethical solutions, this dissertation argues that practices should be rooted in a critical mapping of power and position, and/or critical positionality. Critical positionality not only supplies organizers and organizations with a toolkit for understanding their own subjectivity and relationships to structures of power and privilege, but this toolkit can be harnessed such that these individuals and movements can make tactical use of existing structures while simultaneously building alternatives. Certainly we cannot afford to ignore the systems of distribution that make up the industrial food system. For many, shopping in the industrial marketplace is not always a choice. But the work of food justice is to change that – slowly dismantling the industrial food systems hold over their communities by creating the necessary infrastructure, institutions, and imaginations necessary for a post-industrial beyond.
Davianna McGregor, in her book *Na KuaʻĀina*, writes of cultural kīpuka in Hawai‘i that, like the alternative economies that are evidenced through food justice activism, suggest an alternative historical narrative challenging the triumph of capitalism and colonialism. She writes,

The beauty of the natural kīpuka is not only their ability to resist destructive forces, but their ability to regenerate life on the barren lava that surrounds them…The rural communities where kuaʻāina have remained are cultural kīpuka that have been by passed by the major historic forces of economic, political, and social change in Hawai‘i. Like the dynamic life forces in a natural kīpuka, cultural kīpuka are communities from which Native Hawaiian culture can be regenerated and revitalized in the setting of contemporary Hawai‘i...[M]ainstream history of Hawai‘i focuses too narrowly on this histories of change and cultural impact on Hawaiian society...A broader more inclusive history would document the changes but also the continuity (McGregor 2007, 7–8; 21–22).

Kākoʻo ʻŌiwi builds on both the traditions of cultural kīpuka and the alternative economic models of food justice work. Although they face significant structural barriers in attaining financial solvency, these barriers are not unique to their organization and innovative solutions are available for the leadership to tap into and retrofit for their project. Koa and Jan both display the tactical agency and power of community organizers working to carve out conditions whereby projects like Māhuahua ‘Ai o Hoi can fulfill their mission. Designing programs that honor the visions of kūpuna, the memories and knowledges embedded within the Hawaiian language and the stories of place, Kākoʻo ʻŌiwi empowers staff, volunteers, and the community at large to participate in the actualization of living history, a space that provides a place for community, food, and sustainable self-determination. As such, it also enables community members, staff and kūpuna to imagine a historically rooted alternative future for this island. In their vision statement, Kākoʻo ʻŌiwi writes:

Heʻeia is an abundant food-producing land: forests, loʻi kalo, organic farms, fishponds, and the ocean extend as far as the eye can see. Agricultural production serves to educate, feed, and sustain the community. Families gather for celebration, learning, and healing. Traditional and modern arts and sciences strengthen the Heʻeia community. Hoi is restored as a native wetland. Koloa, ʻalae ʻula, and aeʻo have returned and the splashing of ‘amaʻama sounds like rain falling on Heʻeia Stream. Clean, clear water feeds the fishpond and native limu and other marine life are once again abundant.
Chapter 4 - A New Politics

Food Policy Councils and Tactical Policy Activism

Many people do not feel helpless in the face of this staggering array of environmental and social problems. They realize that, as the country moves further and further from democratic practice, these conditions have been accompanied and enabled by a process that wrests decision-making away from ordinary people. They witness the failure of electoral politics and political parties to solve agrifood problems, a situation they fear can only get worse, as the decision making ability of elected governments is superseded by the power of global capital to limit choice...Not content to let food production, distribution, and quality be defined and determined by faceless others, they have taken action. Consciously or not, they are a part of a new assemblage of movements sweeping the nation, movements for alternative food and agriculture.
Patricia Allen, Together at the Table (2004)

In November 2010, 75 people met at Church of the Crossroads in Honolulu to discuss the formation of the Hawai‘i Food Policy Council (HFPC). The original meeting was inspired by a visit from internationally renowned food scholar Francis Moore Lappé, who would repeatedly refer to the food policy council movement on the mainland as a model for participatory, grassroots, food-system activism. Although the first FPC was formed in Knoxville in 1982, over the past 5 years, they have rapidly expanded across every level of governance: neighborhood, city, county, and state - becoming “the fastest-growing institutional innovation in food governance” (W. Roberts 2010, 173).
Forming a Food Policy Council (FPC) was proposed as way to bring together the broad range of grassroots, community-based organizations, government agencies, and businesses focusing on food, nutrition, health, and/or agriculture.93

93 Hawai‘i is the most remote island chain on earth, located over 2500 miles from the continental US. Hawai‘i imports roughly eighty-percent of its food, as its agricultural sector, is shrinking in acreage and largely dedicated to export oriented food production, ornamentals (flowers, etc), and genetically modified seed corn production (DBEDT 2012). Rooted in the mahele, which privatized communally managed lands and concentrated wealth and power in the hands of haole elites, today Hawai‘i is still dominated by large private landowners who have actively sought the development agricultural land in order to maximize the revenue yield (Andrade 2001). Despite its reputation as one of the healthiest states in the US, Hawai‘i’s Native Hawaiian and Pacific Island communities face high rates of obesity, heart disease, and diabetes (Economic Research Service, USDA 2010; Hawaii State Diabetes Prevention and Control Program 2004; Shintani 1994). Formed in response to these unique social, historical, economic, and geographical food system challenges, the state boasts a wide variety of community-based organizations focusing on agrifood issues. The HFPC proposed that coordination across organizations could help these movements work with government in order to grow their impact.
Despite its sustained growth, focus, and accomplishments, the organization continues to experience the structurally rooted challenges discussed in previous chapters: how to address power and positionality as we form the organization and outreach into communities, how to maintain diverse participation both internally and in our outreach, how to secure a sustainable revenue source that will allow us to focus on our unique mission and not projects; and how to articulate that mission in ways that will encourage tactical participation in institutions that are otherwise deeply allied with the neoliberal project. The struggles clarified both the potential and the limitations inherent within the food policy council as an innovative form of community-based governance.

Hitherto, this dissertation has outlined the political imaginary of food justice organizations that work largely on project-based direct action and process-oriented education and capacity building. These strategies equip participants and communities with new relationships, skills, communication techniques, and perception of possibility in order to build new communities and enact new economies. As the food justice movement expands its impact, organizations are also running up against legal and regulatory barriers insofar as the contemporary food/policy system structurally privileges the neoliberal subject, institutions, and relations. As a result, food justice organizations increasingly engage with policy, forming food policy councils in order to connect the various silos of the food system and the governmental apparatuses that regulate it.

Drawing on three years of working in Hawaiʻi’s policy arena (as a researcher, lobbyist, community food activist/volunteer, and a board member of the HFPC), as well as the policy narratives offered by activists working on similar issues both in the state and on the continent, this chapter examines the potential and the limitations of FPCs, the common forms of intervention, and how these forms of intervention fit into and can be inspired by the political imaginaries of food justice organizations. I argue that the strategies and tactics of food justice organizations offer productive challenges to FPCs, driving my theorization of tactical policy activism as an orientation toward the policy process.

Using the Legalize Paʻiʻai bill, signed by Governor Neil Abercrombie in 2010, I illustrate just what such a tactical orientation entails when considering policy work within

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94 See Appendix 2 for the HFPC’s progress and achievements.
a contemporary settler state. Tactical policy activism is a way for grassroots organizations and food policy councils to conceptualize policy work, offering opportunities for concrete wins that facilitate and broaden their impact, without having policy overwhelm the power and importance of their projects and programs. The Legalize Paʻiʻai case study provides a model for imagining how empowered communities, cultivated through practices of critical positionality, can map the power dynamics of liberal political institutions in order to cultivate conditions of autonomy, self-sufficiency, and resilience. Such a model can be retrofitted for a variety of community contexts: from immigrant communities navigating a variety of citizenship-statuses to African American communities who inherit a long legacy of political disenfranchisement.

*The Food/Policy System*

As we examined in Chapter 1, US fiscal, social, and economic policy has played a primary role in the transformation of the American agrifood system into the industrial behemoth that it is today. Organized in and around an ethos of profit maximization, privatization of land and resources, globalization, and deregulation, the laws, policies, and programs that make up the American food/policy regime systematically privilege large industrial-oriented participants across the agrifood system, from farm to table.

Intervention into this food/policy system is particularly difficult given its complexity, as the policies, laws, and programs fall under the jurisdiction of a number of federal, state and local agencies. Different layers of authority (federal, state, and municipal) enable and/or restrict food system policy and governance (summarized in Table 5-1), and this next section reviews the major agencies, policies, laws and regulations that exist at each level of the American political system. The purpose of this section is not to provide an exhaustive map of food policy and food policy opportunities, but rather to begin capturing the complexity of the food policy system, the complicated interplay of federal, state, and local laws, and the extent to which these policies serve to shore up the power of industrial food interests in the United States.

While the federal government (via its Departments of Agriculture, Education, Health and Human services, etc) has a good deal of power in developing the laws and regulations that structure the food/policy system, authority is also given to states and
municipalities (Harper et al. 2009; Leib, Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic, and Community Food Security Coalition 2012). The US constitution defines the areas of authority for the federal government and the limits of the federal government’s ability to intervene in state governance, granting significant power to states to create or facilitate alternative food systems within state lines. The federal government derives much of its authority from the commerce clause, which allows it to regulate and require the uniform labeling of foods travelling across state-lines while at the same time restricting local and state authorities from discriminating against goods and commerce from out-of-state. The commerce clause constitutional provision poses significant roadblocks for food policy activists looking to leverage state and municipal law and procurement towards the benefit of local food system stakeholders, although many states and municipalities have begun adopting geographic preferences in order to support local farmers (Denning, Graff, and Wooten 2010).

### Table 5-1: Role of Various Levels of Government in Food Policy

*Republished with permission from Good Laws, Good Food 2012*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Federal Level</th>
<th>State Level</th>
<th>Local Level</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food Safety</strong></td>
<td>The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) creates the FDA <em>Food Code</em>, which</td>
<td>State governments implement laws and regulations affecting restaurants and</td>
<td>Local public health departments are often tasked with enforcing state food</td>
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<td></td>
<td>recommends (but does not require) food safety provisions for retail stores</td>
<td>and retail stores, based on federal guidance. Most states adopt a modified</td>
<td>safety requirements. Some local governments also have their own set of food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and restaurants. It is not mandatory but has been adopted in some form by</td>
<td>version of the FDA <em>Food Code</em>. States can create their own meat and poultry</td>
<td>safety ordinances applicable to local restaurants or grocery stores.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>most states. The federal government also regulates food safety for meat and</td>
<td>processing inspection regime, but it must be at least as stringent as the</td>
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<td></td>
<td>poultry processing, monitors food safety generally, and has some food recall</td>
<td>federal regime.</td>
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<td>authority.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Land Use and Zoning</strong></td>
<td>Zoning and land use law are primarily state and local issues. However,</td>
<td>While it is within the state’s power to regulate zoning, most states</td>
<td>Most states delegate zoning and land use powers to local governments. As</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>federal law (particularly individual rights</td>
<td>delegate this power to local governments. Nonetheless, statewide</td>
<td>these are predominantly local</td>
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</tbody>
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95 This Table originally included significant case-law related footnotes. I’ve reproduced the original table in Appendix 3.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographic Preference in Food Procurement</th>
<th>Food Labeling</th>
<th>Food Assistance Benefits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food purchased using federal dollars, such as meals under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), must follow federal procurement guidelines. Federal law now authorizes schools using NSLP dollars to prefer food grown locally. Programs using state or local dollars do not need to follow federal rules.</td>
<td>The federal government regulates ingredient and nutrition labeling for all packaged foods that travel in interstate commerce (i.e., go across state lines), however, state and local governments can choose to require menu labeling or other labeling for items not included in the federal laws. Federal law also regulates nutrition labeling of chain retail food establishments and chain vending machine operators.</td>
<td>Most food assistance programs, like SNAP, WIC, etc., are authorized and funded at the federal level, though states may contribute funds for program administration or to increase the amount of benefits available to participants.</td>
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<tr>
<td>State agencies or institutions using state funds must follow state procurement guidelines. An increasing number of states have tailored their procurement regulations to encourage local purchasing by state agencies/institutions. When using federal money, federal rules still apply.</td>
<td>States are preempted from enacting labeling laws for packaged foods or chain restaurants/vending machines, as these are regulated by federal law. However, states may: require labeling for non-packaged foods, require labeling for non-chain restaurants, pass labeling rules for foods that do not cross state lines, and require other label information (e.g. Alaska requires the labeling of farm-raised salmon products).</td>
<td>State governments are responsible for administering food assistance programs in terms of authorizing participants and, in some cases, vendors. States sometimes contribute additional funds to the programs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local agencies, schools, and institutions may prefer local food when spending federal funds, as authorized under federal law. When using state funds or local funds, they may give preference to local food if authorized under the relevant state or local authority.</td>
<td>If allowed under state law, local governments can pass some food labeling rules for foods not covered under federal law. For example, local governments can require labeling for non-chain restaurants.</td>
<td>Local governments generally do not play a role in administering food assistance programs, but they can encourage their residents to participate in the programs, which are often underutilized, or provide incentives to those who purchase healthy options with their benefits.</td>
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</table>
Federal food and agriculture policy involves major interplay between the executive and legislative branches of the federal government. While the Congress largely manages the budgetary aspects of the food system, and the political power dynamics of the House and Senate produces biases within the allocation of funding to programs that target different regions as states,\textsuperscript{96} the administration of these funds is primarily the responsibility of the executive branch (and more specifically the Department of Agriculture). The primary piece of federal food and agriculture legislation in the United States is the Farm Bill. Passed every five years, this massive piece of legislation deals with all aspects of food and agriculture, from farming, marketing, environmental protections, land use, international trade, and to food safety regulations. The most infamous aspect of the farm bill is its continued heavy subsidization of commodity crops which in turn drives the production and affordability of processed foods (Nestle 2002; Pollan 2007).\textsuperscript{97} The Farm Bill also funds the USDA to run farmer support programs like crop insurance, subsidized loan programs, and training opportunities that it runs directly or through Land-Grant Institution extensions. These educational programs, like the regulations and subsidies, often reflect industrialized visions of food and farming.

Administered by the USDA, the Farm Bill also allocates funding for School Lunch Programs, the Women Infant & Children (WIC) food program and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as the food stamp program. These programs receive eighty-percent of Farm Bill funds. Allocated to states in the form of block grants, SNAP and WIC benefits have a uniform federal baseline (except for Hawaiʻi and Alaska) and can be supplemented by state-funded programs. SNAP and WIC programs are primary sites of intervention in food justice work, as they

\textsuperscript{96} In 2011, the top 10 states received 62.6\% of the crop subsidy funding: (ranked in order of funding: Texas, Iowa, Illinois, North Dakota, Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska, South Dakota, Missouri, Indiana). Hawaiʻi was ranked forty-three, receiving $7,268,135 compared to Texas’s $1,436,500,831 (Environmental Working Group 2012).

\textsuperscript{97} As written in Chapter 1, the top 10\% of subsidy recipients today receive 75\% of the subsidies, totaling $200 billion between 1995 and 2011. The average subsidy for the top 1\% was $110,373 while the bottom 80\% of subsidy recipients received an average of $1858 (Environmental Working Group 2011). Corn growers are the largest subsidy recipients, receiving more than $81 billion. Specialty crops, also known as fruits and vegetables, are generally not subsidized. The USDA estimates the 60\% of the farmers in the US do not receive governmental assistance. In addition to subsidies, a post-Butzian USDA gears funding for research and development towards technological innovations that increase the productivity of large farms, and structures access to capital such that larger farms can more easily borrow money to improve infrastructure and on-farm technology (W. Allen and Wilson 2012, 100).
offer funds to facilitate access to fresh foods for communities who might otherwise lack access. Further, through SNAP, WIC, and institutional procurement programs (schools, hospitals, government cafeterias, etc), the government also acts as a major market consumer, setting standards that can drive significant changes to the marketplace. Finally, the Farm Bill allocates $5 million dollars per year for the Community Food Projects Grant (CPFG), which supports a variety of holistic, food justice oriented projects. Thus while the Farm Bill is generally understood as a piece of legislation that typifies how the US government directly supports the industrial food system, it contains programs like the CFPG, demonstrating the potential of policy to drive the development of community-based food systems.98

Similarly, the executive branch’s discursive capacity can focus public attention on agrifood issues and use this power to reshape funding priorities among agencies. Most recently, the Let’s Move campaign, initiated by First Lady Michelle Obama, drew attention to the epidemic of childhood obesity in the United States and resulted in a variety of community-based projects that targeted holistic programs for prevention and mitigation.99 Speaking of the rhetorical power of the executive branch to drive public discourse and focus public attention (Katznelson, Kesselman, and Draper 2010, 179), Let’s Move put childhood obesity at the center of the mainstream public health debate, shifted the emphasis away from personal responsibility towards institutional change (Weingart 2012). Focusing on reform in business practices, schools and homes,

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98 The USDA writes: “CFPs develop long-term solutions to ensure food security in communities by linking local food production and processing to the goals of community development, economic opportunity, and environmental enhancement. Such comprehensive solutions may include: 1) improving access to high-quality, affordable food among low-income households; 2) expanding economic opportunities for community residents through local businesses or other economic development, and improving employment opportunities, job training, youth apprenticeship, and school-to-work transition; and 3) supporting local food systems – from urban gardening to local farms – that provide high-quality fresh foods, ideally with minimal adverse environmental impact. All proposed solutions must tie into community food needs. Project designs should integrate multiple objectives. They should address impacts beyond a specific goal, such as increasing food produced for or available to a specific group. Goals and objectives should integrate economic, social, and environmental impacts such as job training, employment opportunities, small business expansion, neighborhood revitalization, open space development, transportation assistance or other community enhancements (USDA 2009).

99 Let’s Move! is a comprehensive initiative addressing the childhood obesity epidemic in the United States, focusing on educating and empowering parents and consumers to make healthier choices, revamping nutritional labeling, increasing the quality and nutrition of the National School Lunch Program, increasing children's opportunities for physical activity, and improving access to fresh foods in all communities (“Learn The Facts” 2013; Weingart 2012; Wojcicki JM and Heyman MB 2010).
Lets Move also facilitated the passage of The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, which authorizes funding and sets new policies for the USDA’s core nutritional programming, changing the school lunch program for the first time in fifteen years.¹⁰⁰

Also administered through the executive branch, the USDA, Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) develop and administer federal health and safety guidelines for food producers, distributors, processors, preparers, and servers (FDA 2013; USDA 2011, 2013c). While states do have the authority to retrofit these programs to meet local needs, all health and safety standards must exceed or be “at least as stringent” as the federal regime (Leib, Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic, and Community Food Security Coalition 2012, 12). These safety standards reveal one of the most glaring contradictions in federal agrifood policy - as the industrialization and globalization of food produces a greater need for food safety legislation (P. Roberts 2009), to address increased risks of contamination and food-borne illness that can rapidly spread through the industrial food chain¹⁰¹, the responsive federal policy regulating food and farm safety creates almost insurmountable cost-related barriers for small scale producers. Such costs further encourage the industrialization and centralization of food production and processing on large farms and in large facilities.

Because federal health and safety regulations provide the baseline, states like Hawai‘i, who boast a greater number of small-scale diversified producers, struggle to develop programs that more adequately suit their agricultural sector. From 2010-2013, in my capacity as a HFPC board member, I participated in the Hawai‘i Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) working group, which was organized in response to the increasing number of institutions and grocery stores requiring that farmers be “food-safety certified.” The problem with this requirement was that the process of certification was designed around a mono-cultural agriculture framework that assumed farmers would specialize in one crop or two crops and that they could easily separate the ‘farm’ from the

¹⁰⁰ The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act increased the funding allocated to schools for their school lunch program and created performance based incentives for these schools to provide more whole foods to children (rather than fruits and vegetables in their processed forms); it also created toolkits for schools to use in order to provide locally and garden grown produce in their cafeterias (USDA 2013b).
¹⁰¹ The Center for Disease Control (CDC) “estimates that each year roughly 1 in 6 Americans (or 48 million people) get sick, 128,000 are hospitalized, and 3,000 die of food borne diseases” (CDC 2013a).
community and the wilderness in order to avoid potential contamination from birds, pigs, etc. While such requirements might make sense for a 10,000-acre corn farm in Missouri, for a 2-3 acre farm in Hawai‘i, protecting from birds and wild pigs is not as easy. Similarly, the USDA requirements for certified slaughterhouses has driven all but two of Hawai‘i’s slaughterhouses out of business because they lack the volume or through-put that could pay for the full-time inspector that the USDA requires. Again, local policy makers and activists are struggling to develop a certification process that makes sense for a marketplace as small as Hawai‘i’s.

Related to the development of standards around food and agriculture safety are the development regulations around agricultural inputs (pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, etc) and the administration of the USDA organic certification program. Again speaking to the irony of a system that produces the problems it then seeks to regulate, government subsidies encourage the production of crops that require heavy use of petro-chemical inputs. The organic certification program, formed in response to widespread use of chemicals on farms, then puts the administrative burden on organic producers to prove that they are organic, while “conventional” producers have little to no over-sight when it comes to regulating inputs.

While federal and state powers are uniformly established by the constitution, the relationship between municipal and state government varies broadly depending on the state. Determined through Home Rule and Dillon’s Rule\(^{102}\) clauses within state constitutions, municipalities are variously empowered to create laws and programs that serve the specific needs of their constituencies. States and cities are largely tasked with the administration and enforcement of federal laws and programs; however, both are granted significant power when it comes to land-use, waste/recycling, and educational

\(^{102}\) Good Food, Good Laws explains: “Dillon’s Rule holds that local governments have only those powers that are expressly given to them by the state; according to Dillon’s Rule, local governments only have those powers that are: granted in express words; necessarily implied or necessarily incident to the powers expressly granted; and absolutely essential to the declared objects and purposes of the corporation— not simply convenient, but indispensable.….Home Rule, on the other hand, is a broad grant of power from the state that allows municipalities to independently handle local matters without the need for special legislation by the state, as long as the municipal laws do not conflict with state laws. This power to exercise certain functions is transferred from the state to local governments through the state’s constitution or state legislation” (Lang 1991 quoted in:; Leib, Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic, and Community Food Security Coalition 2012).
programming at the primary, secondary, and higher-education levels. Further, the federal
government shares responsibility with state and city government for the development and
maintenance of key elements of our food system infrastructure including roads, irrigation,
aggregating and processing facilities, and certain distribution points (ports, food banks,
etc).

Lower levels of government also play a key role in facilitating long-term planning
for food security in ways that reflect the unique historical, environmental, cultural, and
socio-economic features of their food-system. Hawai‘i illustrates the extreme need of
local agents to reflect upon state-specific needs, insofar as the geographic isolation of the
state produces unique vulnerabilities to the supply chain. Representative Chris Lee offers
the following summary of the role the State of Hawai‘i can play in the food system, “In
an ideal scenario, we could 1) refocus public attention and awareness on an issue and
create a changing marketplace that way; 2) we can change incentives and infrastructure
that supports various branches of the economy, like agriculture, to make it possible to
reach new levels of resiliency, sustainability, and food self-sufficiency” (OI - Lee 2012).

Goal setting around areas of local food production often work in conjunction with land-
use laws, enabling the preservation of agricultural lands in the face of urban expansion
and facilitating the production of food in cities through urban farming provisions. In
summary, the food/policy system is incredibly complex, creating significant barriers and
incredible opportunities for activists interested in using government to facilitate local
food production Mapping the food/policy system is an important part of the process of
creating effective forms of governmental engagement: “like water trying to escape
through the weakest part of a dam, political actors are always looking for a weakest point
in a wall of power” (Katznelson, Kesselman, and Draper 2010, 136). Mapping the
complexity of the system, and identifying which institutions and levels of government
have jurisdiction over the various parts of the food system, food policy activists then
know where and to whom they should lobby to effect the changes they want to see.103

103 For example, attempts to reform school lunch programs, as a way of combating childhood obesity and
diabetes and leveraging state dollars to drive economic growth, must not only negotiate with Department of
Education and Health regulations over what kinds of food can be institutionally provisioned, what the
prevailing definition of a balanced and healthy meal is (one where french fries count as a serving of
vegetables), and whether or not fast food and vending machines are allowed on campus; simultaneously,
they must contend with the lack of adequate local and organic farms and products, lack of parent, teacher,
Food Policy Making

In conjunction with the “fractured policy environment” of the contemporary US food/policy system, characterized by siloed agencies, industries, and food system sectors, (Harper et al. 2009) are the power dynamics of the policy process that cut across both legislative and bureaucratic bodies. As power crowds out the people from this policy process and structurally privileges the voice of industry, the process of policymaking poses significant challenges for policy intervention around alternative agrifood issues and disenfranchises the voices and viewpoints of variously positioned community stakeholders. In this section, I will discuss the power dynamics of the policy process as they pertain to the food system, so that FPCs emerge as an innovative response to restore the voice of the people into the processes governing food and agriculture.

Indeed, as a system governed by a complex and fractured bureaucratic structure, subject to the whims of the market’s invisible hand, American farmers, growers, workers, and consumers generally “lack opportunities to engage in important decisions about changes in the food system, such as who retains the profits, how much they get, how food is marketed to adults and children, how food is raised, and whether it is labeled to indicate where and how it was raised” (Anderson 2008, 596). Policy has both material and discursive impacts; it is an important mechanism through which groups can redress social, political, and economic “problems” in their communities. Policy conditions what opportunities people have available to them (education, food, etc.,) and how people talk about the issues they face, both the causes and the solutions – and these impacts reinforce the ways in which social groups imagine and enact social change. In short, policy can explain, in part, why communities do not engage in policy.

and student knowledge (which eases the introduction of unfamiliar fruits and vegetables onto a student’s plate), lack of affordable fresh vegetables (due to insufficient support from local and national governments), and the oversupply of cheap calories from grain-derived sweeteners, oils, and animal feed (which makes unhealthy food the most “rational” choice for institutional budgets). Although it might make sense for school nutrition programs to grow their own fresh fruits and vegetables, via a school gardening program, even more hurdles are confronted, as health regulations often prohibit the consumption of non-certified fruits and veggies in public school, and zoning laws prevent the sale of vegetables grown on non-agricultural land.
Participation in the policy process often reflects pre-existing, structurally determined access to the networks and forms of knowledge that undergird governmental institutions; “political actors devise strategies that they judge are appropriate given the resources they have and the opportunities available to them” (Katznelson, Kesselman, and Draper 2010). Unequal access to money, education, and free time significantly restrict community capacity to engage in policy. In order for policies to gain traction both in the community and within governmental institutions, social problems must have both the attention of the community and government officials, and be seen as a legitimate site for government intervention and/or action. Critical policy analysis recognizes that the processes where by societal problems emerge into mainstream political consciousness are necessarily collective, and the problems exist primarily in terms of how they are defined and conceived in society (Hilgartner and Bosk 1988). Information and education play a key role in not only conditioning those subjectivities, but also the democratic processes they are “free” to participate in. Policy analysts argue, for example, the legitimacy of an issue requires the attention of the public, broadly, which then forced the attention of the state. Yet not all social problems are created equal in this arena of public attention; rather, “the fates of potential problems are governed not only by their objective natures but by a highly selective process” (1988, 57). The stories, realities, and material conditions facing indigenous, low-income, and communities of color are structurally disempowered as “they compete with one another for public attention and societal resources” (ibid). These communities lack the well-funded PR teams, lobbyists, and paid-for representatives of large corporations. Further, these problems are represented in a historical vacuum, and requiring a nuanced analysis that would fundamentally challenge the founding myths of American democracy, including our manifest destiny, meritocracy, and belief that liberty, freedom, and justice exists for all.

Policy also works to construct social populations in ways that limit participation and reduce political efficacy (P. Allen 2004, 45). Anne Schneider and Helen Ingram argue:

Policy sends messages about what government is supposed to do, which citizens are deserving (and which are not), and what kinds of attitudes and participatory patterns are appropriate in a democratic society. Policies that have detrimental impacts on, or are ineffective in solving problems for, certain types of target
populations may not produce citizen participation directed toward policy change because the messages received by these target populations encourage withdrawal or passivity (1993, 334).

For example, FPCs, particularly those emerging from low-income communities, are a part of a broader network of organizations and groups fighting for community food security. Responding to the erosion of the welfare state through Welfare Reform, and the dramatic reduction in the assistance programs provided to low-income families, the Community Food Security movement fought to secure access to food for at-risk communities by creating new funding streams that went beyond simply giving food to enhancing community-focused projects that encourage self-sufficiency. Part of the advocacy process therefore involved the transformation of how the issue of food security was framed, moving away from a model based on food aid and towards a comprehensive framework for building community-based food self-sufficiency, and emphasizing the importance of access to non-emergency sources. Changing the policy language and the policy logic created new conditions for social activism and policy engagement. By framing the issue of hunger as a problem not to be solved by government, but as something to be addressed in communities, by communities, the community food security movement began by encouraging people to participate in the solutions to the problem of hunger. This participation ultimately led to more participatory frameworks for policy development and advocacy, as evidenced by FPCs.

Money plays a disproportionately powerful role throughout the electoral and legislative processes, driving who gets elected, how elected officials vote, and who is appointed to regulate industry. The lack of accessibility to the policy process and policy makers gives disproportionate influence to technocratic players like lobbyists, policy consultants, and think tanks. The professionalization of policy can be linked to a larger modern ideological project of “rationalization” (Stone 2002). The sciences of policy, business administration, and politics have systematically removed “the people” from the purview of policy studies and analysis. Deborah Stone terms this “the rationality project,” which sought to “rescue public policy from the irrationalities and indignities of politics, hoping to make policy instead with rational, analytical, and scientific methods” (Stone 2002, 7). This way of studying policy has often overlooked and underestimated the power
of citizen participation, blossoming into a full blown technocratic industry that only experts and professionals can successfully and efficiently navigate (K. B. Smith 2009). Policy consultants, lobbyists, and professional bureaucrats now manipulate the weak points and loopholes of the policy process in order to secure access and policy for the institutions and individuals with the most money. The professionalization of policy has resulted in the increased alienation and disenfranchisement of regular citizens, ceding the design of programs that most effect them to industry lobbyist experts who have crowded them out of agency decision-making processes. This is because of the ways in which the policy process has leant itself to cooptation by industry and policy specialists who use their “expert” knowledge as a means to silence the everyday life experiences of citizens (Nestle 2002).

Finally, agencies can effectively kill a policy in their administrative processes, nullifying the impact of progressive policy that was passed because of broad-based community organizing; “In many ways, the regulatory process provides the ideal setting for this collusion between the administration and corporate interests because there are numerous subtle and quiet ways to scuttle regulatory protections even while the laws embodying those protections remain in force” (Buzbee 2004). Referred to collectively as the tools of “regulatory underkill,” these strategies are often used to “dismantle regulatory protections of public health and the environment” providing “regulatory relief to polluting industries as furtively as possible, evading the accountability that would result from open efforts to change these statutes that the people of the United States have consistently supported” (ibid). Underkill strategies include failing to fully fund a policy-initiated program or department, resulting in insufficient agency staffing and capacity; creating excessive regulatory obligations which prevent expedient action by the agency; reducing opportunities for public participation and input. Thus policy activism and advocacy require that activists not only endure the long and lobbyist-dominated process of writing and passing a bill, but that they position themselves at the agency level so that they can ensure that bills are properly implemented. Given that most alternative agrifood advocates are volunteers, this kind of agency oversight is nearly impossible and further reduces efficacy.
In summary, the challenges and alienation faced by communities who want or need to reform the food/policy system explains why agrifood advocates have invested so much energy in direct action projects (like those explored in the previous chapters) and largely avoided policy engagement. In his book, *Everything I want to do Is Illegal*, Joel Salatin, nationally renowned “grass-farmer” describes the underside of the food/policy complex, through the small tales and huge absurdities that farmers like Salatin confront as they attempt to grow and sell food within and outside of the industrial food system (Salatin 2007). This is a system where small farmers cannot process meat or poultry on their land; where dwellings (i.e. farm houses) require a permitting process that is almost impossible to navigate; where safety certification asks farmers to control birds flying over head; where charging for farm-tours and on-farm education is a violation of one’s codes regulating land-use. Salatin writes:

As if a highly bureaucratic regulatory system was not already in place, 9/11 fueled renewed acceleration to eliminate freedom from the countryside. And it doesn’t stop with agriculture bureaucrats. It includes all sorts of government agencies, from zoning, to taxing, to food inspectors. These agencies are the ultimate extension of a disconnected, Greco-Roman, Western, egocentric, compartmentalized, reductionist, fragmented, linear thought process… Often, the greatest escapes occur at the moment the noose becomes tightest. I’m feeling the rope, and it’s not very loose. Society seems bound and determined to hang me for everything I want to do. And for sure, surprises are in store that may make society shake its collective head and begin to question some seemingly unalterable doctrines. Doctrines like the righteousness of the bureaucrat. The sanctity of government research. The protection of the Food Safety and Inspection Service. The helpfulness of the USDA (Salatin 2003).

Above all else, Salatin’s calls into question the role of the government in building alternative agrifood systems, and encouraging them to abandon the assumptions that justify their authority, forcing the reader to consider what role, if any, the government and by extension policy have to play in contemporary alternative agrifood movements. Is the government simply a barrier to progressive food activism or can policy serve as an effective tool in the alternative foodie’s political toolkit? If policy is actually important, what can policy do and is it possible for groups to critically (or tactically) participate in the policy process?

Taken together, the complexity of the food/policy system, as well as the power dynamics within the regulatory, bureaucratic and legislative process, have created a
context wherein everyday activists and food system stakeholders do not feel capable of meaningfully participating in the writing and revising of laws that impact the way their food is grown and the kinds of food they and their communities have ready access to. Confusion matched with alienation has driven largely activists away from policy engagement, and towards project-based activism, even while policies continued to pose formidable barriers to their work.

*Food Policy Councils*

Enter Food Policy Councils. FPCs have grown in size, scale and number since the first FPC was formed in Knoxville, TN in 1982; today there are over 200 working at every level of governance: neighborhood, city, county and state. I understand FPCs as a response to the alienation everyday people and food system stakeholders feel to the complexity of the food/policy system. FPCs allow activists to effectively address the barriers policy poses to their work while at the same time providing opportunities to take advantage of the scale of change that policy can uniquely produce. They organize the complexity of the food system and its various stakeholders in a way that can strategically engage the policy process and effectively combat its industrial bias. This is one of their most important innovative contributions to the policy process more generally: FPCs institutionalize a systematic approach to a set of policy problems around food and agriculture. Thus systematic gaze impacts both the way that they understand the problem and the solutions they propose. As Wayne Roberts, longtime head of the Toronto FPC writes, “FPCs support the health and well being of farms and farmers, fisheries and fisherfolk, hunters and gatherers and their ecosystems, as well as the people, processes and environments engaged in regulating, processing, transporting, preparing, serving, eating, and disposing of food as it wends its way along the product life cycle and through the cycle of life” (W. Roberts 2010). Agrifood issues, understood from such a life-cycle standpoint, require the engagement of all stakeholders: from ground to garbage. The various innovative organizational structures that FPCs have devised, like the HFPC structure we explore below, are an attempt to create productive spaces for dialogue among these diverse views, in ways that can drive collaborative, community-based change.
Although FPCs vary widely, they can generally be understood as a grassroots- and community-generated response to the failure of the US’s policy system to produce policies that would facilitate the formation of an alternative food system that combats the ills of industrial food. Some FPCs, like the Los Angeles Food Policy Council, are integrated into the city’s bureaucracy; others, like the Hawai‘i Food Policy Council, exist wholly outside of the government. Whether affiliated directly with government or independent, FPCs have three integrated functions – Networking, Education, Advocacy – which facilitate coordination, empower actors, and create the necessary legal and regulatory conditions for the support of local, accessible food systems.

FPCs offer a space to network across food system “silos” insofar as the disparate sectors of the food system rarely have the opportunity or the ability to convene in one space in order to address systemic gaps and opportunities (in programs, infrastructure, etc.), improve coordination (across agencies, branches, and sectors), and craft innovative, cooperative solutions (Leib, Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic, and Community Food Security Coalition 2012). Through their networking function FPCs demystify the food system’s internal logics and processes. One can imagine how the conversation about food changes when you involve not only lawmakers (and the various think tanks, lobbyists, and corporations who support them), but also chefs, gardeners, parents, teachers, lunchroom workers, etc. By creating “democratic spaces for convergence in diversity,” FPCs elicit “social learning, the basis for social change” (Harper et al. 2009, 7).

In the pursuit of “quick-wins,” “opportunities,” and places for community organizing and advocacy, FPCs often engage in food system mapping, or Community Food Systems Assessments (CFSA), in order to identify stakeholders and ultimately to assess capacity;

A CFSA is a tool for analyzing the elements of the local food supply chain, which includes food production, processing, distribution, consumption, waste management, and all associated regulatory institutions and activities. The data collected through a CFSA can provide a local food policy council with the information it needs to identify specific gaps or weaknesses in the current food system, make informed decisions for developing successful food system programs, strengthen local community networks, increase awareness and understanding of food-related issues, promote health, and preserve local wealth through the economic activity of the local food system (Leib, Harvard Law
By identifying government administrators, businesses, and community members engaged in the food system, CFSAs create a localized, personalized map of the food system and facilitate a shift in how people understand the issue and opportunities, bridging issue groups and agencies, thus encouraging a systematic approach to problems and solutions. FPCs will often participate in this kind of research to facilitate community-wide education and thus improve the quality of the dialogue between community members, core food system stakeholders, elected officials, and agencies. To further the level of community engagement and education, FPCs will often host large public events (conferences, teach-ins, and summits) as well as smaller forums, film-nights, community workdays, food system tours, and hands-on workshops. In this way, food policy councils can create informed and empowered participation in the policy process.

By creating a common pool of literature, information, and data, FPCs influence agency behavior and drive better policy making and implementation. By serving as a source of expertise that actively seeks to distribute knowledge to both the community and policy makers, FPCs take on the role of a think-tank on local food and policy issues, potentially leveraging university research and resources to benefit local, community based food systems. Given the absence of a “Department of Food,” government agencies often lack the capacity and cross-department coordination to “focus on food” and thus fund research that could collect, monitor, and analyze public data across the food system. By doing some of this original research, or publishing white papers and literature reviews for agency heads, FPCs facilitate cooperation between agencies, legislators, and community advocates, allowing communities to effectively and powerfully participate in the agenda-setting phase of policy making.

For example, for the past three years I have been heavily involved in lobbying for food self-sufficiency legislation for the state that involves identifying feasible targets for local food production. The point of the legislation was to create legislative incentives for the preservation of agricultural land and to incentivize the use of this land for food and not commodity/export production. During this process of lobbying for food self-sufficiency goals for the state of Hawai‘i, it was revealed that the Department of
Agriculture (DOA) was not monitoring food production within the state and was not able to determine its import/export ratio. This made setting realistic legislative goals for increasing local food production almost impossible, as legislators were wary of supporting a bill without data and the DOA felt any target established through the legislative process was an inappropriate use of legislative power. When we approached the DOA about how we could support a reinstatement of funding for monitoring and data collection, the DOA lamented that it was unable to “focus on food” at the level we were suggesting and that it was obligated to support all forms of Hawaiʻi’s agriculture (i.e., commodity, export-orientated, the seed-industry, and ornamental (flowers, orchids, etc.)) equally. For these reasons, the DOA testified against almost every bill that suggested the agency create new programs to support food farmers, and legislators pointed to their testimony as the number one reason why they wanted to kill the bill.

The role of the HFPC has therefore been to bring these stakeholders together to work towards a comprehensive solution that reflects the broad coalition of organizations and community members who want to see the state support food-self sufficiency, the agencies who would administer the program, and the legislators who will draft and push legislation through. The HFPC has helped to circulate research to educate community lobbyists so that they understand why the agency lacks capacity and thus might not support this legislation; we have worked with legislators to restore this funding to ensure that this data is collected. Finally, the HFPC has worked, informally, to encourage community members, in their capacity as voters, to support legislators who are willing to draft and push this kind of legislation regardless of the DOA’s opposition.

As platforms for coordination and action, FPCs (can) partake in all levels of the policy process, from the initiation/agenda setting to the final evaluation of policy post-implementation. They should be thought of as mechanisms through which citizens can variously partake in the governmental actions/inactions regarding the food system. Through networking, education, and advocacy, FPCs demystify the policy process by engaging with citizens at the level of their political imaginations, reshaping notions of agency, efficacy, and political strategy. This involves tracing out the limits of policy-based change, and writing policy such that it is able to capture the multiple impacts of the policy process. The other is organizational – to actually build the structures such that
participation for a broad and diverse cross-section of individuals is possible. This means taking into account the various ways that people are excluded from the policy process - be it through linguistic or cultural barriers, inability to find the time or the money to attend a hearing, or differences in education, knowledge, and intelligence. FPCs can be an equalizer in this way if they are designed appropriately.

The result of FPC work, thus far, has been its capacity to democratize the food policy system; to give all people equal access not only to food but also to the policy/procedural processes that largely govern the food system and determines what options are and are not available to local communities. FPCs can be understood as a new way of countering the forms of alienation produced by a policy process that has largely stripped the everyday person of a sense of efficacy and agency within the food policy context. The overall contribution of FPCs might therefore lie outside of the policy process. By serving as a forum that educates citizens on the food system issues which affect them, while also intervening into the institutions which largely govern the production, consumption, preparation, and provisioning of food, FPCs can change not only the way we understand food and agriculture, but also the ways in which we conceptualize political change. Through the work of FPCs, these processes of democratization (in both the food and policy systems) proceed in tandem, transforming our understanding of what it means to be a “citizen” both politically, within the contemporary US and within the industrial food system. FPCs practice a politics rooted in the democratic values of equality and participation. Mark Winne writes,

If we start with a basic understanding of what public policy is and how we find our way to it through food, we may be able to demystify the so-called sausage making process and even uncloak the priesthood of policy wonks. And if we accept the not so commonly remembered truth that public policy of any kind, whether it’s foreign, economic or food policy, is nothing more and nothing less than an expression of our individual and communal values, then we ought to be able to muster the gumption to participate in the process, even when we don’t know the secret handshake (Harper et al. 2009, 13).

FPCs are developing innovative ways to navigate the complexity of the policy system and the consequences of this complexity (apathy, alienation, passivity, etc.), responding to the failures of the contemporary policy model while at the same time refusing to abandon it all together. By practicing a deliberative form of democracy and participatory
policy formation/analysis, they involve an epistemological shift away from the rationalizing approaches which alienate citizens from the public policy process (K. B. Smith 2009, 116–125). Some FPCs utilize a non-hierarchical and participatory model for action and decision-making, radically reversing the organizations of power that characterize the contemporary American policy landscape. This too serves to pluralize political imaginaries and the spaces where political subjectivities are formed. It stands to reason that if participants in food policy councils experience the forms of empowerment and subjective transformation that come from non-representative, directly democratic political organizing, they will be able to formulate a more cogent response and perhaps reject the traditional pathways for political participation that are currently prescribed.

Further, unlike the most predominant food policy discussions in the US, which center around the national subsidy and welfare systems and the global regime of trade policies, “the strength of FPCs lies in their ability to be locally relevant” (Harper et al. 2009, 6). In this way, FPCs reveal the manifestations of our flawed food system as they materialize in our local communities while simultaneously translating larger systematic issues into the local political language. This translation serves to empower communities to organize and advocate, such that they recognize the multiple ways in which they can effect change. As FPCs facilitate conversation and coordination across the food system silos, solutions emerge that can delink citizens and businesses from the dehumanizing processes that characterize the contemporary globalizing industrial food system. As such they participate in practices of deep democracy, rendering both food systems and political systems more just. Gerda Wekerle writes,

Food justice movements are active in transnational networks that challenge the global food system at various scales and create locally grounded alternatives to global food systems based on visions of a more just society…Growing food in the city, developing a regional food system, buy-local campaigns, or microenterprises may be seen as delinking strategies, small initiatives that de-link local economies from the corporate-controlled global food system. More important, perhaps, they exemplify what Appadurai (2001) refers to as “precedesnts” – alternative practices and experiments that may elicit policy change. They may also be “instruments of deep democracy,” validating local knowledge and the active participation of marginalized communities in major cities (Wekerle 2004, 381).
By emerging from the local and addressing the needs of the local, the scale of FPC politics echoes the scale of an alternative, community-based food system model, thus reinforcing a participatory politics of place. As Molly Anderson explains, “Although democratic control of the food system could happen at the national level in the US, it is more likely to happen at a smaller geographical scale that allows for face-to-face interaction and immediate awareness of impacts of the food system on various sectors” (603). Food Policy councils link communities together through their engagement with visible, relevant issues, and allowing them to participate in the institutions and spaces of power from which genuine social change can emerge.

Challenges and Critiques

Despite their potential and intention, scholars and community members question whether FPCs sufficiently include diverse community stakeholders in their organizations (P. Allen 2004; Harper et al. 2009; McCullagh 2012; Slocum 2006; Winne 2008). One of the challenges that the HFPC has faced is how to maintain a diversity of knowledge and life experiences at our table. In Hawai‘i, we found that when asking experts to share their viewpoints, they can do so in a way that many people find intimidating, thus discouraging participation from individuals whose expertise may be drawn less from books, education, and the classroom and more from the trials and tribulations of everyday life (both personal and professional). When FPCs fail to bring all voices to the table, councils may end up focusing their efforts on one sector of the food system rather than taking a “systems approach or addressing the concerns of all constituents” (Harper et al. 2009, 37). We need farmers to explain the realities of regulations, both the limits it imposes and how they have developed ways to get around them (organic certification being a good example), as well as the downstream users who might have justified fears about the realities created by petrochemical industrialized agriculture. While vegetarians and animal rights activists might be concerned with the treatment of animals in industrial processing facilities, local protein producers need to be able to explain why the closure of the state’s slaughter house reinforced the industrial-capitalist dynamics that vegetarians
might also be against. The HFPC also struggled early on with how to control pedantic, single-issue diatribes at public meetings and how to contend with the disappointment “purists” felt after realizing that the HFPC would likely not be purists about our agenda (e.g. anti-GMO, vegetarian, pure organic) (Harper et al. 2009). The same people, over and over, would come to our events and forums in order to monopolize the public participation period with their forceful opinions and presentations. We understood the importance of this kind of passion and commitment to activism, particularly something as seemingly technocratic as policy making; we also knew that while many people were interested in having a space for dialogue and discussion around issues that spanned the food system, they would likely lose interest soon if attending our meetings meant having to listen to people’s rants.

During a 2012 trip to Los Angeles, I visited the offices of the Good Food LA and the LA Food Policy Council, speaking with Paula Daniels, Senior advisor to the mayor and head of the LAFPC. Paula and I spoke at length about the struggles of FPCs to maintain legitimacy both in the eyes of the government and the broader constituency of a social movement that is largely community-based and invested in community participation. Paula explains:

The structure and composition for a food policy council is going to be different for every region. It depends on the dynamics. It depends on who the key players are. We have a ton of organizations in Los Angeles that work on food and nutrition issues. So how do we decide, you know, who’s involved? How do you look at keeping balance in the room in terms of discussion? You will always have a lot of interest from the health and nutrition folks. They’re already formed. They already have their advocacy groups lined up. But are the farmers going to be represented? And do they even know how to have those conversations? Is the business industry, which is the industry you want to influence, going to be represented? Will they have the patience to sit through all the conversations? Will the government agencies want to stay at the table if the conversation is, “you need to do this” and “you need to do that,” but not actually helping them figure out how to do it? Those are some classic dynamics. And we’ve had to ask how to have it survive, how to keep balance, how to find that common area.

104 In 2011, I wrote a short op-ed on the importance of maintaining Oahu’s last remaining slaughterhouse. Shortly thereafter I was inundated with emails and in-person confrontations by animal rights groups questioning how I, as a vegetarian, could ever take this stand (Lukens 2011).
Key to maintaining legitimacy and integrating a diversity of opinions and players into policy discussions is creating an organizational structure that can attend to these differences in positions within the food system and within the food movement simultaneously. Food justice organizations offer a variety of strategy and tactics in order to overcome the key challenges that FPCs face:

1) Projects and organizational design/outreach must begin with antiracist education. Participants need to understand the importance of their own positionality, both in regards to internal operations and how it shapes their relationship to the communities they want to serve.

2) Educate to empower: the educational focus of food policy councils must focus on the historical structures that shape participant and community relationships to the policy process such that they might feel invested in enacting change within institutions that have historically excluded them.

3) Build skills – once community members and participants understand their relationship to the policy process, food policy councils should focus on cultivating the skills that people will need to be effective advocates, particularly given their positional relationship to power institutions.

4) In order to focus on the mission of education and empowerment, FPCs should avoid the grant trap that might lead them into projects that prevent them from fulfilling their key mission.

5) Avoid dogmatism – in order for food policy councils to effectively engage the policy process while at the same time allowing participants to maintain time and focus on project-based missions and validating this work as equally important to the processes of transformation and resistance that a post-neoliberal food system will require.

In her 2012 masters thesis, Molly McCullagh examines “how diverse community residents (defined …as low-income consumers, women, mothers, seniors, youth, and people of color) are included in the work of FPCs,” arguing that without effective strategies for inclusion and empowerment, FPCs will not be able to fulfill their mission
Surveying over forty FPCs, she summarizes the strategies as follows:

They divide generally into “council-based techniques” and “project-based techniques,” offering a variety of valuable options for inclusion at many levels, from direct inclusion on the Council to consultation on specific projects. Council-based techniques include writing language about inclusion into the FPC’s mission statement, specifically including diverse representatives on the council, organizing into working groups and committees, being strategic about meeting times and locations, and presenting at meetings at organizations or city agencies. Project-based techniques include planning events that intentionally involve community residents, tying into existing community processes, conducting focus groups, offering public education about the food system, engaging people in projects, and offering incentives for the community’s participation on the Council or in the Council’s work. Many of these techniques may be considered “best practices” for any organization involved in community engagement, but they will be explored through an FPC lens (McCullagh 2012, 25).

McCullagh research suggests that FPCs are aware of the problems they face in sustaining diverse representation and that they are struggling to develop the capacity to create alternative mechanisms whereby the policy process and the food system are open to all. For example, the HFPC designed our organization structure with the hope of encouraging both public and profession participation in the policy process.
As you can see from the illustration above, using the metaphor of the spoon, we created a structure that uses an eight-person governing board to balance the expertise of the Advisory Board (composed of the individuals closest to the food) with the power of the people (those people with the power to direct the spoon). The Think Tank was designed to leverage the knowledge of the expertise and the power of the university system to establish the expertise of the council generally; the Watch Dogs are the positioned in the various sites of policy making, identifying opportunities for policy intervention and facilitating and new forms of public accountability and participation.

Similarly, Paula Daniels describes how similar attention to diversity and balance lead to LAFPC’s organizational design:

We thought the structure should be, that there should be representation from various sectors, so we laid that out...very carefully looking across the sectors, and also looking at ethnic and gender diversity because that was important. And then
we asked people to come and made it very clear that they’re being invited to participate on this Council because of the entity that they are affiliated with. No substitutions.

But then the other issue is that you have such a huge stakeholder population that’s interested. In L.A., in particular, the numbers here are staggering. And I’ll explain that statement in a second. But the numbers here are pretty staggering. I mean, L.A. is like four million people, 465 square miles. We have hundreds of nonprofit folks and hundreds of people who are interested in this work. So we also knew that there were a lot of people who would be interested in participating but they’d be wondering like, well, why aren’t I on the Council? What’s this Council? How does that work?

So we wanted to have a way that we had flexibility to include people in the decision-making and the work without having every conversation in the room be dominated by process, be dominated by person, topic, or theme. So that’s why the Council had to have that carefully balanced dynamic. So we created a Working Group structure, which exist as subcommittees of the Council. So the subcommittees can have any number of representatives so, you know, depending. They focus on shared interests and themes (Daniels 2012).

Working groups, in conjunction with focus groups, can be an effective strategy for soliciting a diverse array of opinions in different forums and contexts; focus groups allow FPCs to be in touch with diverse communities, in spite of not having direct representation from those communities on their Councils (McCullagh 2012, 40). Although this might not facilitate the over-arching mission of FPCs to network stakeholders across the food system, insofar as focus groups might involve drawing on a specific stakeholder set like farmers to get feedback, it can create spaces where such stakeholders are more comfortable participating.

Lastly, as McCullagh describes, FPCs have altered their meeting structures to allow for more public participation. These alterations might include a standard public comment section after each topic of discussion or smaller group breakout sessions. Smaller group discussions and shared leadership provided everyone an opportunity to participate - especially those community residents who “haven't been given a voice in the past” and didn’t feel “like they have the right to speak up and say what they think” (McCullagh 2012, 33). She quotes one of her interviewees who explained:

Throughout all of that project we often broke into smaller groups and then brought the larger group back. We shared leadership of that group so that
everyone participated in facilitation, note-taking, scribing on the board, or reporting back from the smaller group. We really have found that smaller discussions - so that people feel more comfortable and more compelled to actually voice their opinions - are a great way to be sure all the perspectives are actually given…People have stories to tell and it is through that telling of that story that new ideas are formed. But sometimes they can be kind of negative, like "I went to this agency and blah blah blah" and everyone jumps on that. But one of the things that we crafted into the meetings was that sometimes people just need to get their story out and then you can move forward. So we would say, "Ok, we're going to have a two-and-a-half-hour meeting and we're going to spend the whole first hour just letting people check in and tell their story of the week" and then we would move into the logistics. It really gets the team together and it provided that space for people to really tell their story and feel like they were being heard and to learn from those experiences as well” (ibid, 33).

Beyond creating organizational structures and practices that intentionally strive for inclusion and empowerment, it also important to consider to what extent reform and transformation are possible within the policy context. FPCs that are created through a governmental mandate must take caution in criticizing the existing policy landscape as dependency on governmental funds limit the extent to which the councils achieve the transformative systematic change they often seek. Insofar as FPCs require consistent community support and involvement, and need to maintain a positive and persuasive rapport with lawmakers, they must weigh the pros and cons of systematic critique and initiating actions and programs that have an immediate and visible impact on the lives of people. Indeed, “too great a focus on structural issues threatens to mire councils in unproductive national and even international debates, while too narrow a focus on specific program outcomes may limit the council’s larger policy impact” (Harper et al. 2009, 4). The need to maintain legitimacy and translate systematic critiques into a policy

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105 Given the structural limitations inherent within government sanctioned FPCs, one might wonder why FPCs would consider soliciting inclusion within formal democratic institutions. However, often FPCs are open to governmental support because of the difficulty they face in securing long-term funding streams. Rather than getting sucked into the grant trap, building out FPCs from pre-existing agencies not only gives the council legitimacy in the eyes of policy makers, as well as access to their plans and priorities; it also relieves the council from the endless cycles of grant-writing, many of which require project execution and programming. Like the HFPC experienced with the funding that had us devoting almost all of our organizational time and energy to planning a statewide teach-in and constructing an online stakeholder resources database, project based funding can divert FPCs from their missions to simply network, educate, and advocate. Moreover, 501c3 designations significantly restrict the capacity of organizations to lobby, potentially conflicting with FPCs to dig deep into the policy making process.
proposal that is palatable to powerful ideologues, lobbyists, could take the wind out of the sails of food-democracy and food justice activism, diverting energy and wasting the time of those individuals who invest too much time and too much hope into the policy process.

*Tactical Policy Activism: The Case of Legalize Pa‘i‘ai*

In this chapter, we began by mapping out the complexity of the food policy system and the significant structural barriers that food justice organizations and diverse community stakeholders face in building alternative food systems. We then explored the concept of FPCs as one proposed response to this food policy problem. FPCs are currently struggling to address the structural power relations that are preventing their organizations from fully including the diversity of voices and communities that they were designed to serve. Some have adopted strategies of food justice organizations to empower communities to maintain a commitment to self-reliance self-determination while at the same time tactically engaging the state (McCullagh 2012). Indeed, while FPCs are a response to the alienation produced through the power-laden complexity of the food/policy system, in both its bureaucratic and legislative dynamics, FPCs will only reproduce and reinforce this alienation if they do not actively seek to disrupt these relationships of power within their organizational structures and as they reach out to the broader community in their policy work.

Inspired by the tactical nature of food justice organization’s institutional engagement in their economic and community work, this section offers the story of Legalize Pa‘i‘ai as a way of developing the concept of tactical policy activism. Tactical policy activism is an orientation to the state and the policy process that understands policy as one tool among many for effecting change within the food/policy system. To say that policy work is a tactic is to acknowledge the limitations of state-based activism and engagement, and yet also acknowledge the opportunities that still exist, nevertheless, within the policy process. Tactical policy activism strategically leverages the democratic power of communities and the privileged access of some of the movement’s participants in the policy process; at the same time, such a tactical orientation understands the lure and power of co-optation, avoiding it by creating a process for engaging the policy that takes and wins what it can, understanding all the while that real transformation requires
continuous and increased work outside of the policy process. Ultimately, I propose this orientation to policymaking in order to help FPCs leverage the power built through food justice organizing while also respecting the non-liberal political imaginaries of these organizations and avoiding co-optation and over-extension.

In November 2009, Daniel Anthony, owner of Mana Āi and a local activist dedicated to hand-pounding kalo, was cited by Department of Health inspector for distributing poi “off the board.” This publically exposed the “illegality” of paʻiʻai, as a practice and as a food for the first time (Cheng 2009). According to the Department of Health, the citation was based on Anthony’s use of traditional stone (pohaku kuʻiʻai) and board (papa kuʻiʻai), both of which were seen (through the lens of “scientific state”) as potential pathogen transmitters (Goldberg-Hiller and Silva 2011). Such policies are central to the practices upon which settler colonialism establishes its authority; working through twin processes of expropriation and exploitation and according to the logics of elimination and white supremacy, settler colonialism structures community access to food, land and resources (Aikau and Lukens 2012; A. Smith 2010; Wolfe 2010). Settler colonialism enables and explains the criminalization of native food practices, like paʻiʻai, as discourses centering around health, agriculture land-use food safety are central to the processes whereby native peoples are alienated from the traditional preparation of their foodstuffs, and are thus forced to rely upon the settler economy to feed themselves. The DOH’s science-based health codes largely ignore the cultural significance of paʻiʻai as well as the traditional protocols governing its preparation.106 By preventing people from traditionally pounding kalo, advocates asserted that the Department of Health was limiting the capacity of kalo farmers to create local, sustainable markets in line with the traditional “laws” that Native Hawaiians developed to regulate the preparation and distribution of paʻiʻai.107

What ensued from Anthony’s citation was a major grassroots mobilization around the preservation, perpetuation, and legalization of paʻiʻai, led by a coalition of

106 Although exceptions were granted by the DOH on these grounds in the case of foods like mochi and sushi, the DOH repeatedly asserted the danger of paʻiʻai for anything other than home consumption (OI-Brinker 2012).
107 Daniel Anthony explains, “No one ever defines poi by the ancestral requirements. Poi, by ancestral requirements, requires no fossil fuels to grow it, to harvest it, to cook it, to produce it, and to preserve it” (2012)
community activists, both local, Native Hawaiian, and haole. Key to the process was the HFPC president Amy Brinker (prior to her involvement with the HFPC). Brinker, a haole law student turned lobbyist, used her law-school training to serve as the team’s expert on the Department of Health’s food safety rules and regulations, identifying the possible exemption whereby pa‘i‘ai could be legalized. After considering the multiple ways proceed, from legislation to agency rulemaking, the group decided draft a bill and organize the community to lobby it. After a three-month long campaign of community action at the legislature, Governor Neil Abercrombie signed SB101 into law in June 2011.

The campaign to legalize pa‘i‘ai did not emerge from out of a vacuum. Rather, as the projects like MA‘O Farms and Kāko‘o ʻŌiwi demonstrate (explored at length in chapters 3 and 4), communities across Hawai‘i are working at the intersection of farming and cultural practices, reclaiming access to resources and the traditional food practices that sustained the Hawaiian people prior to and in the midst of American settler colonialism. In particular, restoring loi kalo, farming kalo, and integrating kalo back into local and indigenous diets, all figure centrally into many of the organizations that are working on food issues. The Legalize Pa‘i‘ai can be used to develop a tactical policy framework for forms of state engagement for food justice organizations like MA‘O Farms and Kāko‘o ʻŌiwi that avoids liberal/settler co-optation.

Strategic engagement with the State by kanaka communities is not historically unprecedented in Hawai‘i. Rather, Native Hawaiians have fought hard to maintain and carve out exceptional spaces for the preservation of “traditional” practices, including the right to access culturally significant resources that the settler state only holds in their trust

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108 The group decided to draft legislation as opposed to agency rule change because they felt the process would be more public and thus more effective in ensuring quick and effective redress of the issue. Informing and empowering the public was central to their strategy as the issue had already encountered widespread support publicly and there was no significant legal basis for denying pa‘i‘ai the kinds of exemptions that foods like sushi and honey already had. During the legislative session, the bill’s most forceful opponent was a legislator whose position was significantly influenced by the personal relationship he had with a local taro farmer who had just invested in a new poi mill. Once this farmer was identified, community members personally lobbied him to support the bill, and eventually he agreed to request that the legislator allow the bill to make it through its final committee hearing. Despite significant community lobbying, the legislator did insert compromise language in the final committee hearing, that changed the bill from a law to agency rule making. Upon the bills signing, the DOH was given 1 year to develop rules for the preparation of pa‘i‘ai using the traditional implements of board and stone. According to Amy Brinker, the DOH still has yet to promulgate rules for pa‘i‘ai despite the passage of the 1-year deadline.
for the people of Hawai‘i. The 1970s marked the beginning of a cultural renaissance for Native Hawaiians, reviving the cultural practices of hula, Hawaiian music, lā‘au lapa‘au (traditional Hawaiian healing), traditional Hawaiian sailing, and kalo farming. Mobilizing around struggles for resources and cultural access at Kaho‘olawe, Waiahole/Waikane, and Kalama Valley, and reigniting a political spirit rooted in aloha ʻāina, the cultural renaissance of the 1970s revealed a new political ethos that creatively navigated the space of possibility between political activism in the liberal tradition and sustainable self-determination for kanaka communities.

Aloha ʻāina embodied several layers of responsibility. At one level, it meant protecting the physical sustainability of the Hawaiian lands and natural resources. At another level, it meant organizing and rallying for Hawaiian native rights and sovereignty to achieve the political standing necessary to protect the ʻāina. At the deepest level, it meant a spiritual dedication to honor and worship the gods who were the spiritual life forces of nature (McGregor 2007, 265). As such, aloha ʻāina, provides a historically rooted and culturally relevant ground from which we can theorize new forms of engagement with the legal and policy process of the settler state.

To say that policy work is a tactic is to acknowledge the limitations of state-based activism and engagement, and yet also acknowledge the opportunities that still exist, nevertheless, within the policy process. If projects form the backbone of the food sovereignty movement in Hawai‘i, then it follows that engagement with the policy process is a supplement to and not a replacement for these projects. What the legalize pa‘iʻai did was extend this movement beyond its largely project-based roots, into the realm of tactical policy activism. Legalize pa‘iʻai allowed a coalition of kanaka and settler community members to engage the state and effect concrete and discursive change while not exhausting or overriding the forms of direct action around which these movements formed.

In order for sovereignty and indigenous issues to be translated into policies aimed at the settler state, actors and activists must contend with the variety of complex cultural and political dynamics not often acknowledged in mainstream policymaking and policy studies (B. G. King, Bentele, and Soule 2007). Given the alternative ways of being and looking at the natural and social world, indigenous communities must simultaneously
create two very different forms of legitimacy: 1) within their own communities and 2) within the broader community of both settlers and native peoples. What indigenous communities perceive as “problems” and the ways in which they imagine law and policy rectifying such problems often engages a drastically different worldview than the dominant logic of the liberal capitalist settler state (Goldberg-Hiller and Silva 2011). Similarly, food justice organizations face considerable barriers in holding out the state as the solution, via policy activism, when the state has played such a central role in community disenfranchisement. Legalize Pa‘i‘ai suggests that the legitimacy of the policy comes from organizing communities in a way that allows cultural values to govern the processes whereby advocacy proceeds; in other words, the “ends” of policy activism within food justice organizations can thus be consistent with the “means.” This form of organizing is committed to inclusion and difference: identifying roles for elders, understanding positional relationships to institutions, committing to community participation, dialogue, relationship building, and creating transparent communication and process. This process broadens perceptions of success such that an investment in the means of policy making, or the policy making process, can also allow for it to bear fruit regardless of the actual success of the bill. As Amy Brinker explained:

For folks who sit on the sideline and complain about a structure that still applies to them, they are creating a false reality where you lose a lot of strategic opportunities, partnerships, networks and bridges through which we can effect change. Its better to engage and disagree then to pretend that the system isn’t there at all (OI - Brinker 2012).

In the case of Legalize Pa‘i‘ai, the relationships that existed prior and strengthened during the policy process ended up determining, to a large extent, the ultimate passage of the bill. Thus policy-based relationship building, and the creation of strategic coalitions

109 Particularly when a policy addresses sacred resources and family, both of which challenge the boundaries of the human and natural world that undergird modern law and governmentality, attentiveness to the different modes of defining, translating, and communicating problems and solutions with the law in the settler context are important. Many times, there will need to be a negotiated process of translation whereby strategic opportunities are identified. Indeed, indigenous worldviews co-exist with and are always in dynamic tension with the settler state; problems framed and articulated within indigenous communities according to indigenous logic often require translation into the dominant languages and logic of state-making. Indigenous groups have to decide what they are willing to “lose” in these translations. For example, Legalize Pa‘i‘ai organizers were strategic in communicating the cultural significance of pa‘i‘ai in the advocacy process, reserving room for this significance when it was appropriate and foregoing it when science based arguments were more effective.
around policy projects, show an additional use for policy work in the context of food sovereignty/progressive/indigenous social movements.

Policymaking must take stock in the social and political disadvantages of grassroots and ingenious social group and develop a policy-based praxis that evolves on its own terms and is necessarily sustainable given the small set of resources to which community groups have ready access. Anchoring their analysis in an ecological framework that highlights “the resource constraints that human actors face in construction problem definitions,” (56) Hilgartner and Bosk’s theories on “issue attention” and “legitimacy” are grounded in recognition that public attention is a scarce resource:

Carrying capacities exist not only at the institutional but also at the individual level...members of the public are limited not only by the amount of time and money they can devote to social issues, but also by the amount of “surplus compassion” they can muster for causes beyond the usual immediate concerns of person of their social status (1988, 56).

If we take Hilgartner’s assumption of the limited carrying capacity of individuals to seriously engage in public activism, and then it follows that groups should proceed tactically in their selection of policy goals, always regarding the limited time and carrying capacity of individuals. Project-based social movements can only devote so much time and energy to the policy process. Framing policy tactically is a way to set up manageable expectations of the work required to navigate the policy process. Indeed, individuals are not only limited in what problems they care about, but how they go about addressing those problems. It is hard to sustain interest in the policy process; this goes to the heart of the alienating nature of liberal modernity and representative democracy. In effect, it is key that policy work be supplemental to and not a replacement for project-based activism. In this way, the sustainability and success of these movements is not dependent upon in the success of the policy process.

Additionally, social movements and community-based organizations often rely primarily on volunteer time and energy, both of which are incredibly scarce in our overworked capitalist culture. A broader conceptualization of sustainability includes concerns for human labor and conditions where this resource is cultivated in ways that renew and regenerate labor power, rather than simply extract it. Sustainable policy
engagement is thus policy engagement that does not deplete the intellectual and creative political resources of advocates. When framed and understood tactically, and aligned with project-based work that can directly link advocates to the resources and worldviews they are advocating to protect, policy activism can guard itself from the forms of cooptation and exhaustion that have historically troubled progressive and indigenous communities.

Legalize pa‘i‘ai provides an example of how to form effective coalitions across difference. Built by taking positionality seriously, the respective actions and kuleana of participants reflect their relationships to and within these structures of power. Once relationships of power are acknowledged, collaborative research and relationship-building can result in an acceptance of kuleana and commitment to action. This involves not just empowering indigenous but also disempowering privileged subjects. As such, coalition building in a settler context is an opportunity to identify and dismantle haole supremacy as it operates in an organizational and structural context and leveraging haole privilege towards decolonizing efforts.

In the case of legalize pa‘i‘ai, and Hawai‘i’s food sovereignty movement, there are a variety of structural factors which differently orient actors both towards the project (or the practice of pa‘i‘ai), and the legal structures that were restricting the cultural practice. Amy Brinker, the haole law student central to the campaign’s lobbying strategy, points to the strategic role privileged actors can play in the policy process, allowing haoles leveraging their privilege without necessarily re-inscribing it. Brinker was brought on board by Earl Kawaa, a recognized kupuna in the kalo growing community. In our 2012 interview, Brinker addressed the deep ambivalence toward her work in Hawaiian issues, and revealed the productive power of this ambivalence as it nuanced her own self-articulated positionality and the political actions that she then took:

Amy: I finished my paper but I was still really fired up about the issue. It was clear to me, through all the research, that I wanted to do something about it…I want to change the law…[But] I think in many ways I was the wrong face of who would have been ideal for this project.

Ashley: Because you’re a haole girl from Texas?

Amy: Yes…I hit a block at one point in the paper. It was one point in law school where the work was emotionally exhausting for me. And it wasn’t until [my
advisor and I had a conversation that I was able to pick up the pieces and carry on… It’s out of respect for the culture and the gravity of what has happened here in Hawai‘i that I felt a sense of guilt for working on the topic. Why was I the one fighting this? Knowing that I wasn’t the right person in that way… [What] came up, that really impacted my going forward and actually changed my view on everything if I was serious about working on these things, was that there were folks who would listen to me about this issue that wouldn’t listen to the “right face.” So there was something about validating a perspective because it’s an outsider validating it as opposed to an insider validating it. And so I saw my role, why I could be an important part of this… The other thing that [was] said, because there were people coming around saying, “I can get pa‘i‘ai if I want, so why would you work inside that system?”... And Daniel said hey, If anyone’s trying to say something like that, just tell them “Hey, it’s a haole law. I’m just a haole trying to change haole law.” So in that way, it made perfect sense.”

This settler ambivalence echoes the ambivalence of the white activist struggling to understand her role in food justice work and the forms of responsibility that antiracist education requires for privileged subjects. Legalize Pa‘i‘ai suggests that community can leverage the power of conscious community-based coalitions, built with respect for difference, in order to undermine the structural underpinnings of this power.

Once communities are empowered to engage the policy process, policy work can become creative, rather than simply combative, playful and disruptive. This also allows us to explore the discursive role of policy – creative and tactical policy is a method of political engagement, education, discourse, and community building. It is political process broadly defined. Further, if communities are empowered to play in the policy area, and stretch the limits of the status quo, we create a process where participants are not simply invested in the successful passage of a bill. Rather, a playful, tactical orientation towards policy, one that involves performing sensibilities of power, passing into institutions with the intention of disrupting them, in order to effect the changes

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110 Within the contemporary American settler state, those with privilege write the law; it is one of the primary instruments of their power. As a result, we have food safety laws written by the very industries who produce unsafe food, we have energy laws written by those who profit the most from our energy indulgence. Yet, they are able to do so not only because of their relative privilege within these institutions, but because of their deep investment in the process. Defensive policy activism, whereby communities participate in fighting against the passage of laws often written by the corporate forces who benefit most, can suck energy, deplete resources, and limit the possibilities of policy and politics.
policy is uniquely poised to effect.\footnote{I often describe my role within the HFPC as being an “anarchist in drag.” Given my extremely critical and cynical assessment of the policy process, I am able to play the game and take that tasks it involves “with a grain of salt.”} In this way, tactical policy activism, as a way of thinking about the strategic leveraging of the potential power of food policy councils for the transformative work of alternative agrifood movements, carries the spirit of de Certeau’s\textit{ la perruque}. Translated literally to mean “the wig,” \textit{la perruque} refers to the ways in which workers, and in our instance, “citizens” resist power in ways that are invisible to, or outside the frame of, the disciplinary borders of liberal political participation. A sometimes necessary form of resistance, a way of “making do,” tactical policy activism, in the context of a political movement that seeks to fundamentally transform the political economy of the industrial food system, would be aimed at leeching from or poaching the very system it seeks to overthrow (de Certeau 1984, 26).

As the theory of critical positionality argues, the situated knowledge of those subject spaces sanctioned within the liberal state create new ways of knowing and navigating institutions. Within enemy territory and operating in isolated actions, this knowledge produces an orientation towards the state that makes vigilant use of the “cracks” in the edifice of power (de Certeau 1984). In the context of food justice work, political disenfranchisement is a common denominator for food justice organizations. Whether we are talking about predominantly Black or Latino communities, the movement of immigrant farm-workers, or indigenous communities like those behind Legalize Pa‘i‘ai, each has a long history of exclusion that shape the political imaginaries of participants and their views of state-engagement. Such an orientation, enabled by the situated knowledge of communities that have hitherto been disenfranchised from the freedoms afforded by liberal democratic institutions, provides the basis for a theory of political engagement that communities must take on as they engage the policy process. Indeed, FPCs, although they provide an innovative organizational structure to effect change within the food/policy system, run the risk of reproducing its larger power dynamics if they do not take seriously the limitations of policy based change and yet the need to engage it nevertheless.
**Post-Neoliberal Policy Activism**

If FPCs take seriously the systematic shortcomings of the current political system, and its capacity to produce transformative social change, they need not also abandon policy/state-centered activism. Rather, insofar as they serve as a forum for political imaginations and political practice, they foster hybrid political imaginaries that are able to think about policy differently and critically. Policy, understood non-dogmatically, is a tool to wield when necessary and appropriate. Like all tools, policy has a very specific function. If properly wielded, policy can affect broad, far-reaching, and large-scale social, economic, and political change. Policy adds to the power of our movements, our various projects and programs. It makes projects easier and creates new conditions of possibility for others to join in a movement through funding, tax breaks, hospitable zoning codes, etc. Further, tactical policy, as a means through which to understand the limited power of a specific political practice reliant upon grassroots organizing shifts the emphasis away from the government and onto the community who is capable of creating solutions themselves. George Kent explains, “After decades of organizing around hunger, food and nutrition issues, I’ve come to the conclusion that we need to get away from this idea that we should go to the government to solve all our problems. *We are the people we have been waiting for*” (Lukens 2010).

FPCs thus offer grounds for the formulation of a “weak” theory on policy, one that allows for the consideration of a post-statist policy imagination. In contrast to “strong theory,” which boasts an “embracing reach and a reduced, clarified field of meaning,” accounting for a “wide spectrum of phenomena,” weak theory is “little more than an inscription;” it “welcomes surprise and fails to establish “necessary” connections between phenomena,” liberating the positive affects of free thinking and political action (Gibson-Graham 2006a, 4, 204). A weak theory is open to contingency, to paradox, and to inconsistency, understanding them as central to human being and society. If public policy is simply “communities trying to achieve something as communities” (Stone 2002, 18) food justice organizations suggest that communities have the political will to “accomplish things as communities” outside of the purview of the state. Yet what we lack is a way of understanding how food policy councils and policy engagement fits into this movement. We lack a *language* to describe these phenomena, and a way of conceptualizing policy...
work as something other than a part of “fancy” technocrats. However, a critical reorientation towards the policy system, one that understands its limits but organizes for reform nevertheless, can produce a more tactical use of formal political structures and processes. If we understand the alternative food movement as containing a diverse number of political imaginaries differently acting upon the contemporary industrial food system, and see policy activism as a tactic, rather than the primary strategy of the larger food movement, food policy councils and tactical policy activism emerge as ways of leveraging democratic people power to change power relations within the food system, while at the same time making the policy process participatory. As such, policy work can be understood as adding to and extending the impact of changes to the food system already happening within businesses, within households, and at the level of community.

Tactical policy activism demonstrates the ways in which structurally oppressed groups can engage the state without simultaneously endorsing the legitimacy of that state or having their work co-opted. Just as Gibson-Graham’s work denaturalizes capitalism and “the economy,” so too can community politics and grassroots policy activism, understood in its structural context, denaturalize the liberal hold on our political imaginaries, by suggesting that individuals and organizations can affect meaningful change within the system while at the same time working day to day to transform it.

As a part of a much larger movement of movements for food democracy and social justice, FPCs provide the perfect context in which to examine the effects of political imaginaries and their capacity to generate meaningful and transformative social change. All of these movements have very similar political goals: equitable access to healthy and nutritious food, fair treatment of workers, strong local economies, healthy bodies, healthy people, healthy democracies, etc. But each of these alternative agrifood movements, FPCs included, organizes differently. While one might organize an urban farm project, or teach a healthy cooking class, another might organize around policy issues and advocate for policy reform. Despite their investment in policy creation and critique, FPCs contribute significantly to the cultivation of a political imaginary that

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112 I was recently at a dinner where we presented the work of the HFPC to a variety of stakeholders. One woman said we needed to stop thinking about “fancy policy” and start farming.
emphasizes values of participatory democracy and direct action. Food policy councils should be analyzed for their potentially radical means, and not just their liberal ends.
Conclusion: Towards a Post-Neoliberal Present

Warning: The word “revolution,” which is used constantly throughout these pages with an unironic naivety, may be amusing or off-putting to the modern reader, convinced as he is that effective resistance to the status-quo is impossible and therefore not even worth considering. Gentle reader, we ask that you suspend your disbelief long enough to at least contemplate whether or not such a thing might be worthwhile if it were possible; and then that you suspend it further, long enough to recognize this disbelief for what it is – despair.’
Crimethinc, *Days of War, Nights of Love* (2001)

Organized around three spheres of engagement - the community, the economy, and politics - this dissertation examines how critical positionality is driving the formation of intentional communities rooted in difference. It offers three primary contributions to the discussion of alternative agrifood movements and contemporary resistance to neoliberalism: 1) The concept of critical positionality, as a way of recognizing and conceptualizing the destabilization of identity within a practical context where identity and difference still matter; 2) A non-capitalist reading of food justice work, showing how organizational strategies for financial sustainability tactically engage the neoliberal system while at the same time creating an alternative; 3) a theory of tactics, applied to the political realm through an examination of food policy councils, offering tactical policy activism as a possible orientation for food justice organizations who need to engage the state.

Chapter 3 lays out what critical positionality looks like in the context of concrete organizational action, both internally and through community outreach and engagement. Examining the core conceptual features of ‘community’ within food justice work, it lays out an everyday politics of difference as the onto-political grounds for a new political economy. Then, in chapter 4, I show how critical positionality frames the strategies of food justice organizations’ struggle for economic viability, arguing that the themes of social entrepreneurialism, worker empowerment, and community-focused economic growth should be understood as non-capitalist. The economic activism of food justice work hybridizes the possibilities within capitalism, eschewing its exploitative relations while at the same time understanding the power it nevertheless has to shape communities. Finally, Chapter 5 looks at the role of critical positionality in driving the formation and
the critique of food policy councils. Just like the non-capitalist economic strategies of food justice organizations, I build upon the strategies of Kanaka Maoli with the State of Hawai‘i, and through the case study of Legalize Pa‘i‘ai, show how tactical policy activism offers a way for structurally disempowered groups to engage the state without simultaneously endorsing the legitimacy of that state or having their work co-opted.

By suggesting that individuals and organizations can affect meaningful change within the system while at the same time working day to day to transform it, this dissertation uses the food justice movement as an opportunity to envision pathways towards a more just and sustainable world by identifying the spaces where such a world is already being enacted in the here and now. It begins with communities intentionally reckoning with their differences; it entails the creation of new material conditions and relations such that these communities can de-link from the industrial food system and the neoliberal political economy undergirding it. It ends with the creation, albeit tenuous and emergent, of a revolutionary community-based food system that empower actors to live autonomously, resiliently, and self-sufficiently while still tactically engaging in the neoliberal political economy.

In this way, I argue that what food justice organizations offer, both to our material life world and the political theories we use to interpret and understand it, is new. Food justice organizations actively participate in the creation of alternative worlds within which communities comprised of new social, political, and economic relations. Although critiques of this and other alternative agrifood movements are important, my goal in writing this dissertation was to participate in the long tradition of scholars who seek to trace out the boundaries of power, the spaces of possibility that lie within, and the reality of autonomy from hegemony as it already exists in our everyday lives and worlds (Carlsson 2008; de Certeau 1984; Gibson-Graham 2006a, 2006b; Graeber 2007, 2009; Hardt and Negri 2000, 2000; Hardt 2004; Ranciere 1989). I have written an undoubtedly optimistic, perhaps naïve promise-filled reading of the work of food justice organizations, one that largely sets aside the fact that many organizations are rife with conflict, confronting innumerable obstacles, and struggling to maintain the synergy, balance, and radical orientations that I have proposed. However, by identifying best practices, in creating a space for the theory building that emerges when communities fail forward, this
dissertation and the organizations that inspired it offer a toolkit for transforming or revolutionizing the industrial food system, moving communities towards a post-neoliberal beyond. Food justice organizations offer an opportunity to elaborate a theory of power, resistance, and transformation that is deeply attentive to the spaces of negotiation and practices of resistance. These organizations and the communities they are transforming demonstrate that while there is no over-arching alternative capitalism or liberalism, no replicable model for post-neoliberal food or community, there are orientations, strategies, tactics, and intentions that, when taken together, point to the possibility and reality of something different – something new.

I develop the concept of critical positionality in order to couch my dreams of a post-capitalist present in the realities of an exploitative, capitalist and colonial past, a past which significantly shapes the lives of community members, how they relate to one another, and their relationship with food. Indeed, one of the greatest contributions of food justice organizations is the way in which they destabilize identity and understand its material implications. A theory of critical positionality thus grounds this dissertation, as I argue that it is the defining feature of practices and political imaginaries of food justice work, offering a way of conceptualizing the relationship between identity and political action in food justice organizing. Critical positionality allowed me to connect the power of feminist and post-Structuralist critiques on gender, race, and class with the power of critical political economy, and a radical critique of neoliberalism. This connection drives the practices of food justice organizations, as critical positionality grounds communities in difference, drives the development of alternative economies, and reorients these groups with the government and institutions of power. Critical positionality, as it is practiced in the context of the food justice movement, also suggests that we are all empowered as “theorizing, authorizing subjects” and that as such we can participate in the formation of new worlds, new communities, new political institutions, new economies (Gibson-Graham 2006a). Gibson-Graham write, “Here the politics of the subject involves the active and somewhat scary-sounding process of “resubjectification” – the mobilization and transformation of desires, the cultivation of capacities, and the making of new identifications” (Gibson-Graham 2006a, xxxvi). Such a theory of subjective agency
opens up to a theory of political grounded in an “ethical practice” of alternative political becoming:

The co-implicated process of changing the self/thinking/world is what we identify as an ethical practice. If politics is a process of transformation instituted by taking decisions in an undecidable terrain, ethics is the continual exercising in the face of the need to decide, of a choice to be/act/think a certain way. Ethics involves the embodied practices that bring principles into action. Through self-awareness and transforming practices of the self that gradually become modes of subjectivation, the ethical subject is brought into being (Gibson-Graham 2006a, xxviii).

Resistance movements, in their ways of being, modes of inquiry, and their political practice not only forms the topical subject matter of this dissertation; a commitment to resistance also inform the methodologies I use to understand these alternative social, economic, and political worlds. Participatory research on resistance offers the voices, experiences, and situated knowledge of activists into the scholarly canon, creating an opportunity for theory building that takes seriously nuanced conceptualizations of the world that can only be revealed through resistance. These activists “make (bricolent) innumerable and infinitesimal transformations of and within the dominant cultural economy in order to adapt it to their own interests and make their own rules,” revealing, in the process the negotiable limits of power (de Certeau 1984, xiv). It is [t]here, within the words and worlds that activists struggle with and struggle to articulate, that we find the promise and the reality of post-neoliberalism: A story of self-interrogation, of resistance, of struggle, and of possibility - moving politics past our modern, neoliberal epoch. As Gibson-Graham write:

With the consummate and ultimately crippling arrogance of modernist humanism, we construct ourselves as both the masters and the captives of a world whose truth we truly comprehend. In the face of that world or, more specifically, of the discourse of its economic form, and in the trains of the subjectivity with that discourse it posits and promotes, we struggle to mark the existence and possibility of alternative worlds and to liberate the alternative subjectivities they might permit ” (Gibson-Graham 2006b, 97).

As people all over the world struggle against the varying forms and degrees of exploitation related to and through the processes of neoliberalism and the industrial food system, activists reveal the ontological, epistemological, and political limits of neoliberalism by effectively and tactically resisting them the creation of self-sufficient,
resilient, autonomous localities. Reading resistance with a commitment to multiply it; to inspire and pluralize it; to create new perception of the possible from which new political subjectivities can emerge.

Using such theories of agency and resistance, I leverage the practical and theoretical knowledge generated in resistance to theorize a pathway of radical, revolutionary politics in the here and now. I further radicalize the readings of food justice movements (Alkon and Agyeman 2011; Holt-Gimenez 2011) by showing how these organizations offer a pathway towards post-neoliberal communities. I do this by theorizing food justice organizations at the level of the political imaginary, focusing on the ways in which these activists conceptualize and enact social, political, and economic change. Such an interpretation allows us not only to argue the significance of food justice (as a pathway towards post-neoliberalism) but provides a way of understanding the different strategies and tactics that define agrifood organizations and differently oriented organizations within the broader food movement might collaborate with one another through a more nuanced understanding of their differences. Indeed, a theory of tactics also helps to expand our understanding of why organizational collaboration across different political imaginaries maximizes the potential impact of social movements. As Katznelson et al write:

Like water trying to escape through the weakest part of a dam, political actors are always looking for the weakest point in the wall of power. They may engage in different form of political participation simultaneously, or they may concentrate exclusively on mobilizing voters, lobbying officials, or organizing protests. But the appropriate mix of strategies depends on the circumstances these activists confront…The sequences in which different forms of political participation appear, and whether they supplement of substitute for one another, depends on the resources political actors can mobilize and they opportunities they have to deploy them (Katznelson, Kesselman, and Draper 2010, 136).

An expansive theory of tactics for radical grassroots organizations allows us to identify how groups can leverage the differences of political actors, as these differences shape and are shaped by privilege and access to institutions and resources. As such, this dissertation responds to one of the most pressing questions facing all resistance movements today, and that is how can we most effectively work together across our differences? How do
we create effective coalitions in the service of creating something that others can’t help but love (Schell 2003)?

Participatory research processes like the one pursued in this dissertation project create the possibility of scholarly work that contributes not only to a critical field of inquiry and analysis, but a text that has value for the communities in which one is working. Despite its theoretical arc, I consistently focus on practices in order to cultivate the toolkit necessary for transformative change in the here and now. As Alfonso Morales argues, such a contribution is not just scholarly, but also important for the very organizations this scholarly work engages:

A vision of self-sustaining, independent, yet interdependent community and local economic activity etches itself in different ways in distinct communities, not so much as resistance to industrial agriculture, but more toward establishing resilient and sustainable communities. Though this vision may be clear to some, to make it actionable and understand how it can be successfully operationalized requires further research and experimentation. (Morales 2011, 169)

The pressing relevance of my larger analysis confronts me on a daily basis, as I continue my work in these fields. For example, I received a phone call the other day from a woman I will call Jane. Jane is an active, very well known haole attorney here in Hawai‘i with a special interest in community food systems. She had been hired by a community health center to help assemble a “food-systems working group” that would conduct a community food systems assessment for the valley in order to improve the community’s access to healthy food. They had six months to complete the entire project. The purpose of recounting this conversation is to demonstrate how absolutely pressing the questions driving this dissertation are to the success of organizations searching for ways to fundamentally transform the industrial food system and the material realities of communities living without access to good, clean, fair food.

The food systems working group Jane was tasked to organize was supposed to mimic the role of a food policy council, but at the neighborhood level. This particular community, like many of the communities we have discussed in this dissertation, is populated primarily by a broad cross-section of different races and ethnic groups. Most are low income, and many rely upon government benefits to feed themselves. The community also faces the related health problems mentioned earlier, including high rates
of diabetes and obesity. The community also boasts a wide range of social assets – close
cultural and historical connections to food and land as well as strong social institutions
including the health center initiating this project.

My suggestion to Jane, and to any activist mapping out pathways for effective
work in the agrifood system, is to begin by asking who is at the table, who is not at the
table, and what are the relationships of power that underpin intra-organizational power
dynamics as well as organizational outreach – in other words, how they plan to include
and serve the community in their work. In order to practice a post-neoliberal politics, we
must begin by interrogating the self, the other, and the relationships of power that exist
between. Identity matters. The communities formed and through food justice work, or
alternative agrifood movement more generally, must first and foremost take the time, to
address the ways in which power has profoundly shaped the individuals, identity,
resources, and relationships that inform both the current version of the industrial food
system there, and thus also the responsive alternatives being built as well. This kind of
community-based process of locating self and other can guide how an individual
participates in the movement and where the movement is going – the many alternative
futures being built in the here and now.

One effective strategy for situating bodies and minds within the matrices of power
is to participate in antiracism trainings. Creating levels of consciousness that attend to
positionality within organizational staff will take time, but it will make their work more
effective. Critical to these trainings is the cultivation of tools that will allow organizations
to listen and foster relationships of difference within the organizations and with the
community. These trainings not only empower, but create new forms of attention and
responsibility among privileged subject-positions. Can an organization be successful
without purposefully engaging in this kind of capacity building? If the goal is to create a
truly alternative food system that delinks communities from the neoliberal institutions
and relations, then organizations cannot achieve this goal without doing this work. The
legacies of capitalism and liberalism, as they have shaped people’s identities and material
lives, are significant enough that no alternative can emerge without attending first to the
materiality and corporeality of historically rooted systems of power.
Next I suggested to Jane that the organization engage in a mapping of this community for public gathering places, assets, important institutions, and leaders. Food justice organizations are able to build new communities capable of building new food systems because they begin with the communities themselves, and not the ideas of what they believe needs to happen. Community already exists in churches, parks, beaches, recreation centers, schools; it is the responsibility of organizations working to effect change in the food system to build from these institutions and create opportunities for conversation where community members are comfortable speaking. Organizations like the one Jane was working to form need to attend church meetings, volunteer at events the community attends, and begin designing their project based on community’s feedback. In order for change to be effective, communities must be included meaningfully within the organization, its decision-making processes and how it plans to conduct its work.

In the course of my conversation, obviously the six-month timeline for design and implementation made the entire trajectory of my suggestions impossible, however this is the dismal reality of social justice work. We are chained to a non-profit industrial complex that, despite our best intentions, radically curtails the transformative potential of our work. Neoliberalism’s primary task is to create the conditions of its own reproduction, materially and imaginatively “it is a subject that produces it own image of authority. This is a form of legitimation that rests on nothing outside itself and is re-proposed ceaselessly by developing its own languages of self-validation” (Hardt and Negri 2000, 33). As such, focus on food justice organizing must involve building the infrastructure capable for transforming the relations of food production and consumption such that alternatives are truly capable of organizing labor and sustaining lives. Interpreting the task of economics broadly, such that our economic practices capture all of the ways in which we manage our resources and time, food justice organizations remind us that we must continue to see our agency within the capitalist system and intentionally develop alternative economic infrastructures that work independently from the global economy. By reading non-capitalism into discourses of food justice, I offer an alternative narrative of politics that can be further developed and built upon. This story, which is not a story of the past but a story of the present, seeks to find spaces of
autonomy within an ever-expanding capitalist system and imaginary that seeks to claim us all.

By rooting the necessary conditions for transformation within community-based systems of production and consumption, it becomes possible to tactically engage institutions of power. Indeed the purpose of Jane’s call was to talk about the struggles the HFPC faced in establishing the council. Attracting and sustaining community input in ways that empower these communities to effect policy change requires the intentional cultivation of a new community politics, one that is rooted in a recognition and respect for the histories of exploitation that underpin material and emotional realities. Policy work should be understood as one tool for community organizations that when wielded, can extend the impact of their work by leveraging institutional power or removing barriers to success. It takes many stories of communities to reveal the obstacles and opportunities and it takes long-term capacity building and organizational design to organize subjects in such a way that harnesses the power of people and expertise - appropriately balancing them for success.

In Closing – Reframing Everyday Lives of Resistance

I am a mother, student, activist, lobbyist, organizer, owner, worker. Variously positioned within matrices of power that cut across institutions and spaces, bodies and lives, I am often confronted with the paradoxes of contemporary resistance: I am a subject of power and oppression. I experience moments of deeply felt agency and alienation. I am subject to modes of domination that condition their own overcoming. I confront the structures of capitalism and liberal governance that are seemingly insurmountable and yet still inspire profound acts of courage, creativity, and transformation. Everyday I, along many others including the voices and lives that inspire this dissertation, carve out a space for my family and my community, where we can feel empowered to make our world a better place. In everyday practices of resistance and defiance, together we produce a range of possibilities that many would argue are naïve, absurd, even impossible. While the hegemony of neoliberalism might work, in part, through a claiming of these insurgent life-worlds, negating, delegitimizing, or co-opting them, the experiences of these spaces, and the forms of empowerment they produce,
“disarm and dislocate the naturalized dominance” of liberalism and capitalism revealing the fractures within these systems, their incompleteness, their failures, their constitutive outsides (Gibson-Graham 2006b)

This is the power of food justice organizations and the communities, economies, and political worlds they build. They matter. They are real. They are material. They feed. They live. They grow. They sustain. To nourish their bodies. To participate and ensure the health and well being of themselves, their children, and future generations.

Food justice organizations intervene in these regimes at the level of everyday regimentation and enactment, cultivating new subjects capable of building new communities, economies, and a new politics. It is the focus on food and community (or everyday politics relationships across difference) within food justice activism that make resilience, self-sufficiency and autonomy truly possible. These organizations create an alternative food system that, as it is built, can truly contend with the different relationship people have, historically and culturally, with food.

Indeed, you cannot argue with the palpability, the tangibility, the difference food makes in the lives and bodies of living human beings. Food, as the locus of organization around which communities begin to tackle larger, structurally rooted issues like identity, power, privilege, relations of production, etc., creates the conditions whereby we can begin to theorize the politics of a post-neoliberal community-based economy. This dissertation hopes to contribute to multiple disciplinary conversations as they inform our understanding of food, resistance, economics, and politics. Food studies, as a multidisciplinary study of both the industrial food system and the movements that have arisen in response to it, has broadened our understanding of how power has shaped our cultural, material, and imaginative relationships with food. As Jack Kloppenberg, et al, write, “While the character and action of corporate power needs to be recognized and understood, we need to see that farmers, consumers, and local communities are not simply victims or pawns and that they are capable of resistance and regeneration” (J. Kloppenburg, Hendrickson, and Stevenson 1996, 39). Though deeply embedded in necessity, food justice organizations make contributions to the realm of political theory as they reveal and transcend the boundaries produced through a modern political critique. Such boundaries operate through a discounting and/or a not seeing of non-liberal, non-
capitalist politics as they operate in ways that cannot be translated into the modern discursive frame. It is at the apex of theory and practice that our elaboration of food justice organizations and their contributions to political theory begin. Food allows us to explore the dynamics of power as it shapes our larger political economy and identity. As Michael Pollan writes:

Food is a powerful metaphor for a great many of the values to which people feel globalization poses a threat, including the distinctiveness of local cultures and identities, the survival of local landscapes, and biodiversity… So much about life in a global economy feels as if it has passed beyond the individual’s control – what happens to our jobs, to the prices at the gas station, to the vote in the legislature. But somehow food still feels different. We can still decide, every day, what we’re going to put into our bodies, what sort of food chain we want to participate in (2007, 257).

We can decide, everyday, the kind of world and food system we want to participate in. Certainly the power dynamics of this decision-making require attention, such that some alternative or more readily available to some than others, however it is the project of this dissertation to show what emerges when communities decide to abandon the industrial food system and cultivate food justice. The political and economic worlds produced through critical positionality directly challenges these structural underpinnings and constitutive power dynamics of industrial food. In the place of singularity there is plurality; instead of dependence there is autonomy; instead of representation there is direct action; instead of crisis there is resiliency.

In order to further cultivate a politics of collective action that expand these viable alternatives to neoliberalism, this dissertation offers an expansive vision of what is possible in the here and now through food justice work. Gibson-Graham write, “A careful analysis of what can be drawn upon to begin the building process, the courage to make a realistic assessment of what might stand in the way of success, and the decision to go forward with a mixture of creative disrespect and protective caution” (Gibson-Graham 2006a, xxxvi). Within the food justice movement, expanding perceptions of possibility requires recognition of the historical injustices that have hitherto prevented oppressed peoples from maintaining their own food self-sufficiency and autonomy. This structural exclusion from the neoliberal order has meant a history without ownership of land and resources, a lack of access to educational institutions, and a lack of access to capital for
the growth and development of black, indigenous, or immigrant-owned enterprises. Disrupting the hegemonic construction of expertise and the valorization of knowledge, food justice organizations politicize the epistemologies of neo-liberalism while simultaneously creating alternatives to it. This work not only “offers a more adequate, richer, better account of the world” for communities and organizational networks, but encourages a “critical, reflexive relation to… [the] practices of domination and the unequal parts of privilege and oppression that make up all positions” (Haraway 1988, 579). In other words, by destabilizing history and expertise in a more generalized, community context, practices of critical historiography produce and are produced by a critical-positional consciousness. What food justice organizations both suggest and practice is that an alternative political economy can only emerge from the basis of community-thinking, or community-minding. This thinking and minding is, in and of itself, a process that is both counter-intuitive - after years of living in a world where the individual and the self trumps the other and one’s collective - but simultaneously deeply intuitive and reflective of an ever present excess and exception haunting neoliberal subjectivity. Invested in cultivating the deep diversity that is required for healthy communities, the soil within which food justice is sown begets a radically different future world upon which new economies and new politics are grown.
Appendix 1: Questions from Peggy McIntosh’s White privilege: Unpacking the invisible Knapsack (1989)

1. I can if I wish arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.

2. I can avoid spending time with people whom I was trained to mistrust and who have learned to mistrust my kind or me.

3. If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area which I can afford and in which I would want to live.

4. I can be pretty sure that my neighbors in such a location will be neutral or pleasant to me.

5. I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.

6. I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented.

7. When I am told about our national heritage or about "civilization," I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.

8. I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.

9. If I want to, I can be pretty sure of finding a publisher for this piece on white privilege.

10. I can be pretty sure of having my voice heard in a group in which I am the only member of my race.

11. I can be casual about whether or not to listen to another person's voice in a group in which s/he is the only member of his/her race.

12. I can go into a music shop and count on finding the music of my race represented, into a supermarket and find the staple foods which fit with my cultural traditions, into a hairdresser's shop and find someone who can cut my hair.

13. Whether I use checks, credit cards or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial reliability.

14. I can arrange to protect my children most of the time from people who might not like them.

15. I do not have to educate my children to be aware of systemic racism for their own daily physical protection.
16. I can be pretty sure that my children's teachers and employers will tolerate them if they fit school and workplace norms; my chief worries about them do not concern others' attitudes toward their race.

17. I can talk with my mouth full and not have people put this down to my color.

18. I can swear, or dress in second hand clothes, or not answer letters, without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty or the illiteracy of my race.

19. I can speak in public to a powerful male group without putting my race on trial.

20. I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.

21. I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.

22. I can remain oblivious of the language and customs of persons of color who constitute the world's majority without feeling in my culture any penalty for such oblivion.

23. I can criticize our government and talk about how much I fear its policies and behavior without being seen as a cultural outsider.

24. I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk to the "person in charge", I will be facing a person of my race.

25. If a traffic cop pulls me over or if the IRS audits my tax return, I can be sure I haven't been singled out because of my race.

26. I can easily buy posters, post-cards, picture books, greeting cards, dolls, toys and children's magazines featuring people of my race.

27. I can go home from most meetings of organizations I belong to feeling somewhat tied in, rather than isolated, out-of-place, outnumbered, unheard, held at a distance or feared.

28. I can be pretty sure that an argument with a colleague of another race is more likely to jeopardize her/his chances for advancement than to jeopardize mine.

29. I can be pretty sure that if I argue for the promotion of a person of another race, or a program centering on race, this is not likely to cost me heavily within my present setting, even if my colleagues disagree with me.

30. If I declare there is a racial issue at hand, or there isn't a racial issue at hand, my race will lend me more credibility for either position than a person of color will have.
31. I can choose to ignore developments in minority writing and minority activist programs, or disparage them, or learn from them, but in any case, I can find ways to be more or less protected from negative consequences of any of these choices.

32. My culture gives me little fear about ignoring the perspectives and powers of people of other races.

33. I am not made acutely aware that my shape, bearing or body odor will be taken as a reflection on my race.

34. I can worry about racism without being seen as self-interested or self-seeking.

35. I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having my co-workers on the job suspect that I got it because of my race.

36. If my day, week or year is going badly, I need not ask of each negative episode or situation whether it had racial overtones.

37. I can be pretty sure of finding people who would be willing to talk with me and advise me about my next steps, professionally.

38. I can think over many options, social, political, imaginative or professional, without asking whether a person of my race would be accepted or allowed to do what I want to do.

39. I can be late to a meeting without having the lateness reflect on my race.

40. I can choose public accommodation without fearing that people of my race cannot get in or will be mistreated in the places I have chosen.

41. I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help, my race will not work against me.

42. I can arrange my activities so that I will never have to experience feelings of rejection owing to my race.

43. If I have low credibility as a leader I can be sure that my race is not the problem.

44. I can easily find academic courses and institutions which give attention only to people of my race.

45. I can expect figurative language and imagery in all of the arts to testify to experiences of my race.

46. I can chose blemish cover or bandages in "flesh" color and have them more or less match my skin.
47. I can travel alone or with my spouse without expecting embarrassment or hostility in those who deal with us.

48. I have no difficulty finding neighborhoods where people approve of our household.

49. My children are given texts and classes which implicitly support our kind of family unit and do not turn them against my choice of domestic partnership.

50. I will feel welcomed and "normal" in the usual walks of public life, institutional and social.
Appendix 2: Hawai‘i Food Policy Council Achievements

2013
- Finalized action plan developed late 2012
- Developed job descriptions, recruited, selected and orientated the Governing Board
- Hosted a Love Your Food System Party to engage our community
- Developed job description, recruited and selected Think Tank Project Manager
- Planned and implemented a Pau Hana Talk Story with potential Advisory Board members

2012
- Created a framework for a Stakeholder Resource Database with a Hawai‘i People’s Fund grant
- Finalized our governance and operating structures
- Elected an Executive Board of Directors
- Completed an Indiegogo fundraiser and with community help and financial support, we met our goal by 188%
- Conducted a Food Futures Workshop at the Hawai‘i Ag Conference with UH Futures Studies Dept., Ag Leadership Foundation of Hawai‘i, UMU, and KYA Studio
- Funded a scholar to present at a conference themed ‘AI PONO, OLA PONO on Kaho‘olawe
- Organized a panel at Forces for Good (Sierra Club Capitol Watch)
- Planned and participated in a day long Strategic Planning with facilitator (funded by Indiegogo)
- CSA Cooking Class by Macrobiotic Hawai‘i (produce donated by MA‘O Organic Farms)
- Movie Night with Dinner at Sweet Home Waimanalo
- Farm Dinner with Mark Noguchi, MA‘O, and UMU
- Advocated support for Food Self Sufficiency Bill (HB2703) in collaboration with Sierra Club, Kanu Hawai‘i, Kokua Foundation, and State Legislators

2011
- September 2011 – Big, Hairy, Audacious Ideas for a Hawai‘i Food Revolution (partnership with Kanu Hawai‘i, Kōkua Hawai‘i Foundation, The Kaiser Permanente Foundation and The Culinary Arts Department of Kapi‘olani Community College)
- July 2011 – Hawaii Food Policy Council Teach-In
- July 2011 – School Lunch: Farm to School Policy Efforts and Challenges in Hawaii
- May 2011 – Bringing the Farm Bill home: Exploring the Local Side of the Federal Farm Bill
- March 2011 – HFPC Community Forum Resilient Island Food Systems: Food Security and Climate Change
Appendix 3:

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<th>ROLE OF VARIOUS LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT IN FOOD POLICY</th>
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\(^{116}\) §§ 451–72; §§ 601–95.

number of states have tailored their procurement regulations to encourage local purchasing by state agencies/institutions. When using federal money, federal rules still apply as authorized under federal law. When using state funds or local funds, they may give preference to local food if authorized under the relevant state or local authority.

| FOOD LABELING | The federal government regulates ingredient and nutrition labeling for all packaged foods that travel in interstate commerce (i.e., go across state lines), however, state and local governments can choose to require menu labeling or other labeling for items not included in the federal laws. Federal law also regulates nutrition labeling of chain retail food establishments and chain vending machine operators. States are preempted from enacting labeling laws for packaged foods or chain restaurants/vending machines, as these are regulated by federal law. However, states may: require labeling for non-packaged foods, require labeling for non-chain restaurants, pass labeling rules for foods that do not cross state lines, and require other label information (e.g. Alaska requires the labeling of farm-raised salmon products).

| FOOD ASSISTANCE BENEFITS | Most food assistance programs, like SNAP, WIC, etc., are authorized and funded at the federal level, though states may contribute funds for program administration or to increase the amount of benefits available to participants. State governments are responsible for administering food assistance programs in terms of authorizing participants and, in some cases, vendors. States sometimes contribute additional funds to the programs. Local governments generally do not play a role in administering food assistance programs, but they can encourage their residents to participate in the programs, which are often underutilized, or provide incentives to those who purchase healthy options with their benefits. | If allowed under state law, local governments can pass some food labeling rules for foods not covered under federal law. For example, local governments can require labeling for non-chain restaurants. |

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