Using human ecology to identify potential pathways to the proliferation of bioregional values-led food procurement: What do Canberra Food Co-op members perceive as the benefits of participation in a solidarity-based food co-operative

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Declaration

I hereby declare that, except where it is otherwise acknowledged in the text, this thesis represents my own original work. All sources used have been acknowledged.

Keri James

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Acknowledgements

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Abstract

Solidarity-based food networks provide food procurement opportunities outside of the unjust and unsustainable global industrial food system. This research seeks insight into the interactions of one such solidarity-based food system and some of its members, who are creating community around values-led food-choices - to better understand how a potential proliferation of such systems could influence change across the broader food system. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with twenty committed working members of the Canberra Food Co-op. As a non-Indigenous researcher with a background in learning from First Nations Peoples, the Indigenous research methodologies of relational ethics of care and Dadirri - deep listening (Atkinson, 2002), were foundational to the research and interview process. The interview recordings provided data thematically analysed with a human ecology lens. Five common interview themes around values, ethics, food choices, community, and barriers and enablers were identified, and comparisons made with previous work on food values and systems. Using Wilkes' (2022) model, this study finds that co-op members attribute combinations of values-led, instrumental, systemic, and relational reasons for initial involvement at the co-op. Relational reasons alone however are found to sustain those memberships over time. Members consider that their values deepen at the co-op, and are strengthened by working together in community. Drawing upon the systems diagrams of human ecology, this research found that the main barrier to the further proliferation of solidarity-based community co-ops is lack of accessible public spaces. This case study has established that these working members see their co-op and community as central to their lives and wellbeing, and that their ongoing contributions there strengthen and deepen their values, enabling them to more confidently enact those values outside of the co-op. Overall, this research concludes that if values-led food networks, ones that hold space and opportunity for communal gathering and closer relationships between farmers and members, are to proliferate, then more access to available public spaces to create community is required. Without government support and regulation to enable these conditions, those interested in creating community around solidarity-based food options find themselves necessarily considering food procurement avenues outside of space-based food co-operatives and food networks operating with an exchange of money.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The issue of values-led food procurement arises for consumers in market-based economies such as in the Australian context because it is now commonly accepted that the global food system is problematic in terms of sustainability, ethics, and justice; and because there is such a plethora of marketing propaganda about all things food. There is a growing onus upon individuals to consider their values and beliefs in their purchase and consumption patterns. Shouldering the responsibility of trying to fix the problems in the food supply chain through one's own ethical eating could be like trying to solve local water shortages by catching bathwater in a bucket whilst the mining corporation downriver continues to extract 37 megalitres a day (for instance, see Olympic Dam, Green, 2018). So why then do some people decide to start catching their bathwater, or in this case, completely change their food procurement choices? While many people share similar values around sustainability and justice, only a fraction of them currently utilise values-led, or solidarity-based food networks (Wilkes, 2022). This thesis seeks insight into the ways that values-led food networks might influence change in individuals, how being part of such a network might change their wider experiences around environmental and social justice issues; how these networks could proliferate so that more people could realise their values in this way; and whether what is getting in the way of more people moving towards these models in a society who widely share the same values (Wilkes, 2022) is a lack of exigent options to do so.

The research explores these issues around values-led food procurement via a case-study conducted with twenty committed working members of the Canberra Food Co-op (the co-op), a solidarity-based food procurement network. Interview conversations grounded in the relational Indigenous research methodologies of ethics of care and deep listening (Atkinson, 2002; Ungunmerr-Baumann, 2022), important in themselves and in this study because of the nature of solidarity-based community interaction, were conducted at the co-op in the June of 2024. The interviews asked members about the benefits of and barriers to participation, how membership might affect them, and the value-states that they think the co-op community might hold, identifying five key themes in participant responses around values, ethics, food choices, space, and barriers and enablers. Analysis of the data using a human ecology lens and previous food values research (Wilkes 2022) found that these members feel their membership delivers various wellbeing benefits as well as deepening and strengthening their existing values, which supports them in their lives outside of the co-op. Further analysis of data using the systems diagrams of human ecology (Dyball & Newell, 2023) was

undertaken, which identified that while supermarket marketing certainly does target the human impulses of convenience and choice around food provisioning (Dyball & Newell, 2023), a rhizomatic proliferation of convivial food networks such as the co-op is further curtailed simply by a lack of available public spaces in which to place-make solidarity-based food networks (Boarder-Giles, 2021; Hayes, 2020; Khorana, 2018).

Radical social change and new norms in developed countries are necessary for manifold decommodifications, and the kind of paradigms that support biosensitive societies (Boyden, 2016a; Dyball & Newell, 2023; Kothari et al, 2019; Nelson & Edwards, 2020). Solidarity-based food networks are examples of the sort of social institutions that are respectful of the ecological foundations of human existence (Wilkes, 2022). This case-study found that working members of one solidarity-based co-op, acting from and within a set of such values - relational ethics of care, and an accountability to the more-than-human world, both intra and intergenerationally - consider that membership redefines prosperity and poverty, and provides an alternative way to live their lives, rather than one of growth, evermoreism, and the global marketplace as chief arbiter of human affairs (Boyden, 2004; Dyball & Newell, 2023).

This thesis will proceed as follows: the next chapter provides some background and context in regards to food systems, human ecology, values-led food co-operatives, and the food co-op as case-study; chapter three works through the methods and methodologies; chapter four discusses the results and findings; and the conclusion will reiterate and reinforce the findings.

Chapter 2: Background and Context

2.1 Introduction

This research examines one local values-led food network. It sits within the unjust and unsustainable global food system - the effects of which have been comprehensively documented by academics and international experts – unequal access to nutritious and culturally appropriate foods, unjust worker pay and conditions, and industrial agriculture's impacts upon earth systems and planetary boundaries (Boarder-Giles, 2021; Cribb, 2019; 2023; FAO, 2024; Holt-Gimenez, 2019; Hickel, 2016; IPES, 2024a; Lappe, 1998; Mbow et al, 2019; Monbiot, 2022; Patel, 2007; Steffen et al, 2015). In the field of human ecology, scholars underline that these dominant systems of production and consumption exist at the nexus of socio-ecological challenges (Wilkes, 2022), challenges which require a paradigm shift and the sort of biosensitive institutions that could support humanity and earth systems (Boyden, 2016a; Dyball & Newell, 2023). Much of my research year has been spent in scoping both the grassroots and scholarly bodies of literature around food sovereignty and food justice (Martinez-Torres, 2010), agroecology, agribusiness, food security (Pritchard et al, 2016), and the science of earth systems and planetary boundaries in regard to agriculture (Gupta et al, 2024; Whitmee et al, 2015). This reading has helped contextualise the food growing and procurement methods and movements advocated for by solidarity-based food networks as the co-op. After conducting the food co-op interviews and beginning to analyse the results, a different body of literature was explored, around values-led and solidarity-based food systems, including localised - or bioregional - food networks and cooperatives (Levkoe, 2006; Reckinger, 2022; Wearne et al, 2023).

This chapter is a review of some relevant literature and ideas around these territorial networks (IPES, 2024a; Reckinger, 2022). This research focuses on one solidarity-based food co-op in Australia, and the potentiality of more of such systems influencing change in the global food system. The chapter briefly surveys the theory of human ecology, which was the lens used for analysis; then considers the definitions of some relevant terms in a discussion of food systems; and ends by contextualising the research with a look at some literature around solidarity-based food networks - which identifies the gap this research fills. As stated, there is extensive literature on the wider topic of food systems, but less has been written specifically around values-led or solidarity-based food co-ops in Australia, or of their potential to influence change across the broader populace and food system - so that gap is easy to spot. Using human ecology systems diagrams to map the potentiality of bioregional food networks within Australia has also been little explored.

This chapter first provides a small section of background story for the co-op, told from my perspective as long-time working member there, using information gleaned from observations and conversations over the years with many other members. This will place the co-op as case-study both within this research, and within the wider framework of solidarity-based food networks as potential leverages for change in the problematic broader food system (Monbiot, 2022). For the longer version, see Appendix E.

2.2 The Food Co-op

The food co-op evolved at the Australian National University (ANU) in the Seventies as a pragmatic means to an end for a handful of progressive ANU students who wanted cheap, nutritious vegetarian food on campus. That co-operative buying venture was initially called the ANU Nutrition Society and the consumer co-op grew over time to become a physical space, housed in several different buildings centrally situated on the ANU campus. The co-op is presently a large shopfront, selling as cheaply as possible, and as locally sourced as possible, vegetarian, sustainable and ethical dried bulk goods and organic fresh produce. As well as being a popular cheap organic vegetarian lunchtime café, it offers a sizable social space to many different community groups. The co-op remains an alternate, not-for-profit economy and participatory democracy using the original seven Rochdale Principles for cooperatives - Voluntary and open membership; Democratic member control; Member economic participation; Autonomy and independence; Education and training; Cooperation among cooperatives; and Concern for community (ICA, 2024). Working members make the decisions, keep things running, and volunteering is encouraged, with a higher discount also offered for those with up-to-date volunteer hours, as well as remuneration for some of the essential volunteer roles via an internal credit system. For the last ten years or so the co-op has started to pay some Australian dollar wages - to the manager and lunchtime cooks - predominantly women who have arrived in Australia on refugee visas.

The co-op has become as well a recognised bulkfoods provider in the wider Canberra community. The big space with some new overheads to meet and a manager who wanted to create a music venue, begat the addition of ‘acoustic soup’ fundraiser evenings, which continue to run monthly. The creation of conditions allowing for music gatherings, including an alcohol license, meant that other community groups could start using the space and equipment for various fundraisers and events. The co-op is now also a point for the distribution of foods outside of or on the peripheries of the monetary system. There is a no-questions-asked suspended meal program – whereby customers

can purchase a meal in advance so that another customer at another time can claim it when in need and without money - an ANU free student meal program, pickups of daily baked local sourdough breads for free distribution, and the Canberra Food Not Bombs chapter utilise the co-op kitchen to cook up their collected foods for external meal distribution (Boarder-Giles, 2021).

Food cooperatives forming central roles in food systems of different societies overseas, for example Cuba (Funes et al, 2002); and Spain (Nelson & Edwards, 2020), significantly differ to the food co-op model here in Australia, so it is difficult to make direct comparisons - in regards to success, numbers, and working models (ICA, 2024). In Australia food co-ops often hold spaces within university campuses (Local Harvest, 2024) and are usually members of the Australian Federation of Co-ops (The Co-op Federation, 2024), itself a member of the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA, 2024). Many wonder how the Canberra Food Co-op will manage financially long-term. And in the light of widespread societal concern after the recent Australian inquiry into supermarket price gouging (ACCC, 2024), why consumer aspects of the food system are not better regulated, and why solidarity-based food networks are not better supported in Australia (see discussion chapter).

The co-op is a good working model of the kind of values-led, biosensitive food network that challenges the hegemony of the conventional system. Solidarity-based food co-ops are one way that bioregional food networks in societies such as Australia supply urban avenues for ethical biosensitive food procurement while forming relationships with local farmers - and go about changing the food system in wealthier consumer societies. Members alleviate their concerns about supporting inequitable long supply chains which affect so many distant invisible people and landscapes along so many links (Christensen, 2015), by making food procurement choices which avoid the supermarkets. Boarder-Giles (2021) asserts Gibson-Graham's idea that diverse economies exist in messy growing tandem with capitalist economies, adding that they are instances of insurrectionary rhizomatic dispersals.

2.3 Human Ecology

Human ecology is an interdisciplinary branch of academia analysing the bionarrative of complex socio-environmental systems and wicked problems (Boyden, 2016a; Christensen, 2014; Dyball, 2010) using an ecological understanding of history – biohistory (Boyden, 1987; 2004; 2016a; Dyball & Newell, 2023); and systems theory, so as to identify problematic maladaptive paradigms (Dyball & Newell, 2023; Meadows, 1999). Diagrammatic human ecology systems tools such as the 'Cultural

Adaptation Template' (Dyball & Newell, 2023) and other causal diagrams (Proust & Newell, 2020) are used to model variables and feedback interactions to make visible relationships and connections in the behaviour of social structures. Human ecological understanding underpins the analysis used in this research, and different themes arising from the interviews have been modelled using systems diagrams to make clearer which kinds of variables and relationships that biosensitive (Boyden, 2016a; Dyball & Newell, 2023) types of solidarity-based food networks operating at different scales could require (Dyball & Newell, 2023).

Stephen Boyden informally created the ANU human ecology program in 1965 (Boyden, 2016b). Boyden's work begins at the very start of pre-agricultural paleolithic human social-ecological systems, describing the progression of agriculture and continuing to a long-term study of the modern metropolitan centre of Hong Kong (Boyden et al, 1981). Dyball and Newell's foundational book on human ecology as systems approach to sustainability continues Boyden's biohistorical work on human food systems (2023). The advent of agriculture necessitated a new narrative of ownership and control of lands and territories, requiring an evodeviation of existing social structures, and an anthropocentric belief system that could enable the over-exploitation of nature and other people (Dyball & Newell, 2023). These reinforcing feedbacks of colonial growth, conquest, ownership and control, relatively recently led to some of humankind very quickly filling up the earth (Bar-on et al, 2018). This biohistorical understanding of how the progression of industrialised agriculture came to enable and require the current state of the global food system provides the background of this research.

Dyball's extended systems diagram in Figure 1 models the problematic ways in which the food systems of early urban centers operate. As cities become ever larger and more disconnected, they become resource sinks, where one-way flows of nutrients travel from rural producers, into distant urban centers and consumers (Dyball & Newell, 2023).

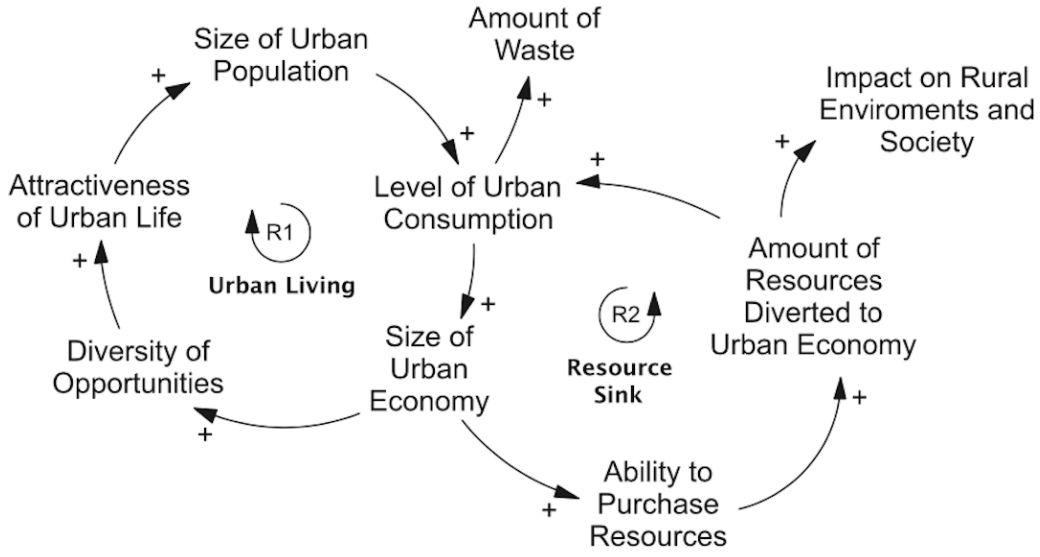

Figure 1 The Early Stage of Urbanisation, Dyball & Newell (2023).

Within circular systems nutrients are returned to the places and peoples they belong with, and the food co-op provides to some degree - for some people - this alternative. Within such an alternative, the maladaptive market perception of landscapes as only resources and ecoservices, with its paradigm of coercion and domination, hyper-separation and domestication (Dyball & Newell, 2023; Hage, 2017), may be returned to a biosensitive paradigm of respect. Within the global food system, ownership and control has become a reinforcing feedback loop with a market narrative of evermoreism, and growth as paradigm (Boyden, 2004; Dyball & Newell, 2023).

The global food system creates perception delays in feedbacks, of both tangible and intangible stocks and flows, while the earth's buffering capacity to replenish and to recycle wastes, is now well exceeded (Dyball & Newell, 2023; Gupta et al, 2024; Steffen et al, 2015). Human ecology's transdisciplinary theories of biounderstanding and biohistory reconceive planetary health as human socio-ecological challenge rather than environmental. An understanding of the belief systems that have legitimised the behaviours allowing the domination of some over many enables opportunities to find again the paradigms that support flourishing biosensitive societies. Respecting the integrity and agency of natural systems in a relational ethics of care (Bawaka Country, 2015) can enable a proliferation of ethical bioregional territorial food networks (IPES, 2024a; Reckinger,2022), including solidarity-based food co-ops. The application of a human ecological lens as methodology to understand food system interactions, food sovereignty, and urban food networks has informed this research (Davila & Dyball, 2015; Davila, 2019; Deutsch et al, 2013; Wilkes, 2022).

2.4 Food Systems

The global food system is unjust, unsustainable and does not feed the world's hungry. The colonial expansion of the technologies of industrial agriculture (IPES, 2024b; Martinez-Alier, 2016; Shiva, 2015), more than any other human activity, has pushed earth systems beyond planetary boundary safe operating limits (Gupta et al, 2024; Steffen et al, 2015; Whitmee et al, 2015).

Consumption or non-consumption is a political act with far reaching consequence. The consumptogenic (Frank, 2023) market society has manufactured a post-scarcity narrative of bountiful plenty and unrestricted access to easily accessible, endless consumer choice (Altman, 1979; Ewan & Ewan, 1982; Lang & Heasman, 2004; Patel, 2007; Singer & Mason, 2006; Singer, 2016). Instead of the mass replication of industrial agriculture's homogenised terraforming, and the unhealthy consumption patterns and commodification that goes with it, an ethics of relational care practiced within biosensitive, solidarity-based communities, and extended to an accountability of political concern to remote producers and landscapes, would result in thick economies of more manageable supply chains of provision (Christensen, 2015). As well as the convergence of core countries in a system of equal exchange (Dyball & Newell, 2023), the reuniting of land and production with estranged consumers remembers the agency of nature and ourselves as part of it all (Bawaka Country, 2015; 2016; 2019; Poelina et al, 2020; Rose, 1996; Weir, 2008) while hopefully also enabling the planet to re-establish homeostasis.

This section defines some key terms in food systems discourse (Carney, 2012) to situate my research. 'The food system' is characterised by long opaque unregulatable supply chains and systemic unsustainable and unjust relationships (Christensen, 2015; IPES, 2024a). Food systems plural, can indicate the alternative to this global monopoly, with food justice movements such as the food sovereignty of territorial markets (Jonas et al, 2023; Kothari, 2019; Reckinger, 2022), Black food sovereignty (Institute for Social Ecology, 2023), and Indigenous relational food landscapes (A Growing Culture, 2020). The food sovereignty movement emerges from the global south and is led by peasant and landless workers (Nyeleni,2007; Martinez-Torres, 2010). Many of these peoples are women living post-their-apocalypse (Colebrook, 2017), in colonised and dispossessed communities, but providing for eighty percent of the world's foods (A Growing Culture et al, 2023; Martinez-Torres, 2010; Patel, 2007). Territorial markets are self-determined spaces not necessarily geographical, that nourish communities and exist outside of, and/or in opposition to the global corporate food system

(IPES, 2024a; Reckinger, 2022). The term bioregional also situates the idea of local within a geographical or place-based arena, such as a catchment - as within Indigenous knowledges - and also extricates that area from colonial mapping demarcations (Bawaka Country, 2016; Kothari et al, 2019; A Growing Culture, 2020; Wearne et al, 2023). Many feelgood ideas and terms are appropriated for greenwashing in the interest of profit - including that of 'local' - as is called out by those reclaiming their bioregional territorial markets, and within solidarity-based food networks (Galt et al, 2019; IPES, 2024a).

Solidarity-based food networks are those in consumer contexts where community food procurement is grounded in practiced ethical values (Dietz, 2015; PIRC, 2022; Singer & Mason, 2006) around justice and environment (Jonas et al, 2023; Sustain, 2022; Wilkes 2022). They can be Community Supported Agriculture schemes (CSAs), urban farm initiatives, farmers markets, co-operatives and other channels that can support territorial markets (IPES, 2024a). New and emerging digital food distribution systems are another method now enabling direct-from-farm purchase (IPES, 2024a). These networks foreground growing practices including permaculture, biodynamics, urban and regenerative agricultures and agroecology (Cox et al, 2023; Rose, 2015). Global corporate interests perpetuate the old idea of green revolution with a business-as-usual model owned by a centralised small group of agro/agribusiness profiteers (IPES, 2024b; Shiva, 2015), who continue to push for industrial intensification tech solutions of chemically-fed, large-scale, genetically modified monocultures, industrial lab foods, and farmerless foods (IPES, 2023; Monbiot, 2022; Shiva, 2015). The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO, 2024) recommends agroecology as only part of a package of solutions for food security, which is problematised by some food sovereignty proponents, who anyway do not much appreciate the FAO discourse of food security (Carney, 2012; Holt-Gimenez, 2019). The notion of food security is critiqued as not addressing how food is grown, or by whom, or how it is accessed – it is 'food from nowhere'; food security also does not address the nutritional values of food, or food dependency for the hungry (Holt-Gimenez, 2019). As well, associated United Nation directives such as the MDGs and SDGs are seen as pushing business-as-usual growth and GDPs, while perpetuating hunger and a poverty line that holds most of the world in poverty (Hickel, 2016; Holt-Gimenez, 2019).

As well as a growing awareness of food justice and the food sovereignty discourse, solidarity-based food networks in industrialised countries also carry ideas such as decentralised participatory democracy (Altman, 1979; Ganz, 2024), degrowth (Demaria et al, 2019; Fitzpatrick et al, 2022; Nelson & Edwards, 2020), the stable state economy (Costanza & Kbuiszewski, 2004), diverse or community

economies (Gibson-Graham, 2008; Kothari et al, 2019), the circular economy (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2011), slow food (Kothari et al, 2019), and permaculture-as-politics (Holmgren, 2018). In Australia these sort of food outlets are often to be found in wealthier socio-economic areas, where the affluent adopt a voluntary simplicity - meanwhile enjoying the very best produce available. Depending on these network's situations though, they also might be at the intersection of diverse, marginalised and working class communities, with their own existent culturally sustainable behaviours and values (Boarder-Giles, 2021; Khorana, 2018). Alcott (2008) problematises ethical personal consumption on the grounds that it distracts from the wider taboo subject of population and the carrying capacity of earth, and that personal behaviour change is no substitute for international political efforts. She questions frugality as inherently good for self or environment, and the efficiency of addressing only the consumption of the rich. Lockie (2008) redefines food consumption as an expression of citizenship, of collective rights and responsibilities, even though individual regulation can be construed as neoliberal project. Lockie situates belonging to alternative food networks as a food citizenship, through participation in social arrangements of solidarity and coordinated action rather than contractual, commoditised relationships of producers and consumers, but posits that narrow stereotyped constructions of what constitutes an ethical consumer will limit the access of some people, and of some values, in the ethical marketplace (2008).

This literature adds insight to the role that solidarity-based food networks play in reconstructing the individual consumer within beneficial biosensitive communities operating with relational ethics of care. Wilkes' work (2022) points to values-led food networks as not just an exit solution or niche space for a minority of elites and outliers holding progressive values and willing to change short-term self-interests of convenience, choice, cost, and control (Christiansen, 2015), but that a wide segment of society hold similar values and would like to engage with these types of food systems. Autonomy, conviviality, agency and creativity are just some of the relevant benefits that members of solidarity-based networks receive and which the global food system just cannot provide (Boyden, 2016; Dyball & Newell, 2023; Wilkes, 2022).

This section has illustrated the problems associated with the dominant food system, whose end-of-the-line conventional food retail business models are fundamentally unable to avoid these harms. More values-led, solidarity-based food network alternatives are needed, with closer relationships between growers and eaters, and the food coop is such an example. This is the basis for this inquiry, which seeks to identify how bioregional values-led food procurement can proliferate.

2.5 Co-ops and Solidarity-based Food Networks:

This thesis was inspired by Bronwyn Wilkes' previous work on food systems and values-led food procurement (2022), as well as other emerging similar research being undertaken in Portland, Oregon, USA. Wilkes' study of the Canberra bioregional foods initiative Canberra Southern Harvest explores the values and motivations around member participation to commence, continue and cease involvement, and the wellbeings that members find arising with participation (2022). In further research with the National Food Values Survey, Wilkes found that a substantial number of Australian people hold similarly aligned values as the only one percent of Australian consumers who actually utilise ethical food networks such as CSAs (Wilkes, 2022). These findings indicate that big agriculture (Shiva, 2015) has such a grip on global economy, policy, and production, that even with widely held identifiable values, societies cannot translate those values into food procurement avenues and food purchasing behaviours (Schmactenberger, 2024).

Wilkes' research reviewed the nascent scholarly work around values and CSA participation in North America and other countries (2022). Wilkes found that literature to indicate that participation in values-led food procurement can catalyse member change to more biosensitive practices (2022). The following discussion comes from some of the authors they reviewed whom are also relevant to this research into solidarity-based food coops.

Michael Carolan's research into alternative foodscapes and more-than-active food citizens in Colorado includes four food cooperatives (2017). Carolan found that of all the alternative foodscapes surveyed, the twenty-seven participants who were involved in food cooperatives most valued local civic participation and collective community (p.211, 2017). Carolan also found that members of food cooperatives were highly engaged in political activities outside of their co-op (2017). Carolan's research articulates why member's reasonings for involvement might change over time from an initial 'single-mindedness' (p.216) when joining, to a more systemic collective awareness, via education through doing (2017). Carolan includes this quote from a participant in the article:

> These places [cooperatives] are incubation spaces for getting people to shift from an 'I' to a 'we' mentality (p. 212).

Cox et al (2008), investigating relationships in alternative food networks, found that communication between members can bring about new understandings, commitment and tolerance for CSA schemes, and radical consumption changes (2008). CSA membership was found to bring together people who share but one interest, an aspect of food procurement, but who then through their interactions, share food and other political/ethical issues more generally (Cox et al, 2008). Hayden and Buck (2011) found ultimately that the ongoing success of their case-study CSA was completely dependent upon members accessing the tactile space of the physical site of the farm (2011). They investigated what changes in ideology, attitudes and behaviour were attributable to participation in CSAs, discussing 'a certain idealism matched to perceived action' (p 340), and the sense of holism that participation in the seasonal growing processes of CSA brings about for members involved on the basis of environmental reasons (2008). They also found that a general consciousness-raising and

> awareness reinforces, deepens, and nuances member's pre-existing environmental commitments, imbuing everyday decision-making with the wellbeing of the greater system (p 340).

Kneafsey et al (2008) also propose that the agency brought about with involvement in alternative food networks, which provide more direct connection with foods, affects, reinforces and develops any existing environmental beliefs and practices of members, potentially creating ecological citizens (2008).

Overall, in relation to the research question of the benefits of and barriers to participation in solidarity-based food co-ops, and the potential pathways to the proliferation of bioregional values-led food procurement, this literature strongly supports the idea that changing patterns of consumption towards values-led food procurement to support systemic change creates meaningful change for solidarity-based food network members in their wider lives. Carolan (2017) indicates that food cooperative members in particular are collectively minded and politically active; Cox et al (2008) points out that communication between food network members brings about greater political and ethical awareness; Haydon and Buck (2011) found that where networks and relationships between farmers and members are closer, pre-existing values around the environment are reinforced; and Kneafsey et al (2008) emphasise this comes about also with the agency of involvement.

There has been little written academically about values-led or solidarity-based food cooperatives in Australia. Using human ecology systems diagrams to map and to define how to support the potential proliferation of bioregional biosensitive food networks of different scales within Australia has also been little explored. The literature around values-led food networks discussed above will be cross-referenced in a following discussion of the results of this research's case-study, which is presented after the next chapter - the methodology section.

Chapter 3: Positionality, Methodology and Methods

3.1 Introduction

Values-led food procurement is reckoned as one way to shorten the supply chains and unsettle the homogeneity of the unjust unsustainable global food system (see previous chapter of this thesis). This chapter will establish the approach of the tools of analysis and design of this thesis, which examines the potentiality of the proliferation of bioregional values-led food procurement. Case study research conducted at the Canberra Food Co-op (the co-op), a local and long-lived example of a values-led food sourcing cooperative, provided qualitative dialogic interview data (Della Porta & Keating, 2008; Flyvbjerg, 2001; Hay & Cope, 2021) from twenty workings members about their perceptions of the benefits of participation in a solidarity-based food coop. This data was analysed using a human ecology lens (Boyden, 2004; Christensen, 2014; Dyball & Newell, 2023; Ison, 2020; Proust & Newell, 2020) and thematic codification (Della Porta & Keating, 2008; Hay & Cope, 2021; van Dijk,2015; Fairclough et al, 2004), to identify five common themes relating to different kinds of motivations, values, benefits and obstacles to participation in this solidarity-based food co-op.

The further discussion of this data and analysis seeks to understand the connections between what co-op members perceive as the benefits of participation in a solidarity-based food co-operative, and the potentiality of the proliferation of bioregional solidarity-based food networks. It is hoped that an exploration of the values behind, and benefits of, participation at the co-op may also help contribute to the objectives there, as well as understand better the potential such systems could have to influence change across the broader populace and food system. This chapter first looks at the positionality of the researcher and the methodological approach of this research and its analysis, outlining the theoretical framework of the research approach, and finally the methods section covers data collection, processing strategies, and analysis.

3.2 Positionality

My personal and academic background has been deeply influenced by First Nations people and Indigenous Studies. My way of being in the world, and also of undertaking research has been charged by these Indigenous scholars and influences.

My standpoint is that of a non-Indigenous, uninvited settler colonial white female-identifying person living on the stolen lands of Ngunnawal, Ngunawal and Ngambri Country, to which surrounding

Ngarigo, Walgalu, Wiradjuri, Gundangurra, and Yuin Peoples also have connection. I am working within the framework of institutional colonial construct; educated within an imposed system of white privilege; researching within the discipline of Environmental Studies. Indigenous scholars assert that academia, the sciences in particular, carries a tacitly assumed inherent false superiority of theory and method (Dreise & Mazurski, 2018; Harriden et al, 2024; Kwaymullina, 2016; Moreton-Robinson 2013; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Whyte, 2013; Wilson, 2008).

First Nations scholars insist that standpoint – our biology, history and discipline, as well as personal prejudices and preferences - influences the conception, collection, analysis and interpretation of data, that neutrality is a fiction, and that good research requires interrogation of privilege and unconscious biases and agenda (Moreton-Robinson, 2013; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Walter, 2010; Wilson, 2008). Furthermore, Indigenous scholars assert that academic research is an accumulative, anti-relational, invasive appropriation – formulaic, normative, mechanical, quantitative, and positivist, where researcher territorialises knowledge as property (Kovach, 2016; Tuck and Yang, 2014). They exhort researchers instead to think and feel deeply, to be vulnerably open to unsettling research and awakening, to explore identity, and desire restitution. This is a high bar, and probably this research hasn't made it, but none-the-less their sentiments are important to recognise.

These scholars writing about methodologies of accountable relational ethics of care guiding and informing research practice and engagement - with deep listening as a way of knowing, centring participant voice, foregrounding ongoing research relationships – write in regard to the Indigenous research agenda and for researchers who might work with First Nations Peoples and knowledges (Atkinson, 2002; Country et al, 2021; Kwaymullina, 2016; Sumida & Mataira, 2019). The applicability of Indigenous Studies methodologies such as the deep listening of Dadirri (Atkinson, 2002; Ungunmerr-Baumann, 2022), and a relational ethics of care as applied to case studies, where a research methodology of co-design is called for, means that this project does foreground accountability. These methodologies require adherence to the ethical foundations of centering research relationships, attendance to positionality, and using the practice of deep listening and relational ethics of care, in a

> process of listening, reflecting, observing the feelings and actions, reflecting and learning, and in the cyclic process, re-listening at deeper and deeper levels of understanding and knowledge-building (p. 19, Atkinson, 2002).

But First Nations scholars warn against the appropriation of Indigenous methodologies (Moreton-Robinson, 2013; Nakata, 2007; Tuck & Yang, 2012; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008).

I am aware of the blinkers and biases created by who I am and where I come from, and aim not to appropriate knowledges, but where possible to live and practice an accountable methodology which decentres western knowledges, theory and methodology (Bawaka Country, 2015; Paradies, 2020; Poelina et al, 2020; Rose, 1996; Seed et al, 1988; Weir, 2008; Yunkaporta, 2019). Somewhere during this research journey, I realised there was strong resistance within me to consider how to wrangle the co-op into an academic piece of writing. The long love that I have for the thing that is 'the co-op' translated into refusal to untangle its threads and systematise its being into writing and diagram, and sadness in attempting to arrest its life to something pinned down on paper. The privileges of learning on Country, and about the Indigenous methodologies of deep listening and relational ethics of care, has enabled me to sit with these tensions and is embedded in my conception of the research questions and methods.

3.3 Methodological Approach, Theoretical Framework

This thesis has surveyed some relevant literature around the normative discourse of food security; theorists writing on agroecology and bioregional, territorial or solidarity-based food systems as alternative to the global food system and agrobusiness; and scholarly work around food sovereignty and food justice, in order to contextualise the research (Bowen, 2009; Fairclough et al, 2004; van Dijk, 2015; Wodak & Reisigl, 2015). This section outlines the reasoning and theory behind the applied research methodologies. The methodological framework of this study, and underpinning all analysis undertaken, is that of relational ethics of care, the centering of participant voices, and the investigation of socio-ecological systems using the methodology and systems thinking of human ecology (Boyden,2004; Christensen, 2014; Dyball & Newell, 2023; Ison, 2020; Proust & Newell, 2020), where some theorists stress that relationality is inherent in understanding the interactions of system components.

The data and knowledge collection of imposed outsider research with its own agendas of appropriation impacts upon participant rights of engagement, refusal, opacity and silences (Dreise & Mazurski, 2018; Nakata, 2007; Glissant, 1996; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Indigenous methodologists require that researchers ask themselves the initial question of whether their research need be undertaken at all (Kwaymullina, 2016; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012), and if so, recommending co-creation,

co-design, co-production, in flexible collaborative research alongside research participants (Dreise & Mazurski, 2018).

As a longtime working member of the co-op my case study research there can be seen as insider researcher within that community (see the introduction of this thesis for more about this and about the co-op). The co-op is a working example of a solidarity-based socially preferred alternative for more ethical food shopping. How did some committed working members there first become involved, and which values do they hold that are able to be realised and embodied at the co-op?

After making sure with the co-op board and managers that the proposed research was desired, participants and managers were invited to make suggestions around data collection. While the methodological approach used here is grounded in the researcher's existing epistemologies and theoretical reading, the research has been formulated by a whole village of co-op member perspective, with the purpose of enabling some benefit for the co-op also (Della Porta & Keating, 2008; Hay & Cope, 2021; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). A group of around six participants, some interested board members, and one of the co-op managers, were asked their thoughts on this research at the co-op, and after the initial interview questions were formulated, were again asked their opinion, and provided further detailed and helpful suggestions that added to the direction of the questions. Three friends who are long term members of the co-op, currently non-working, were asked to trial the interview process – these results are not included in the analysis.

3.4 Qualitative Research Design, Methods

This section outlines the methods, or strategy of inquiry (Wilson, 2008), which was undertaken to ground bioregional, territorial, or solidarity-based food systems with a case study of the co-op. First Nations scholars describe methods, as a strategy of inquiry – an adaptable and flexible roadmap, changing direction when needed along the research journey, or ho'oku'iku'i – stitching together an emergent construction research toolkit of various methods (Wilson, 2008; Kaomea, 2016). This community-based semi-participatory research used a strategy consisting of conversational, semi-structured interviews, and purposed adaptive theory (Della-Porta & Keating, 2008; Hay & Cope, 2021; Layder, 2013). Adaptive theory is more recommended than that of grounded theory for research where time is of the essence (Bessarab D, Ng'andu B, 2010; Bobongie-Harris 2021; Layder, 2013; Sharmil et al, 2021).

The methods of grounded or adaptive theory (Layder, 2013), like slow research (Adams et al, 2014; Frith, 2020), allow for adaptability towards the events and side trips of Wilson's research roadmap (2008), which enables the deconstruction of preconceived formatting and ideas around what and how results may emerge. A framework of Ho'oku'iku'i (Kaomea, 2016) which anticipates the patching together of available resources and methods in response to the arising of research needs, ensures receptivity to all that eventuates, anticipated or otherwise. Following is a discussion of this studies' qualitative research design, and an exposition of how data has been collected and analysed for discussion.

3.5 Research Design

The final draft of the interview questions (see appendix A) uses a mixed method of open and closed question (Della Porta & Keating, 2008; Hay & Cope, 2021), stitched together (Kaomea, 2016) from previous food values research, my own research interests, and the suggestions from co-op collaborators. Using existing formatted questions both enlightened me as to what has come before, and better enabled comparisons to be made with Wilkes' food values data sets (2022; and personal communication).

These existing questionnaires were informed themselves by previous survey instruments, and then developed and adapted based on relevant literature to suit values-led food system research by Wilkes (2022) into those food network's member values and motivations for engagement. Two of Wilkes' Australian survey instruments provided the foundation for this set of interview questions - the Southern Harvest Australia (SHA) subscriber survey instrument, and an online Australian Food Values Survey (2022). Inspiration for several of the questions was also drawn from a Consumer Values Survey Regarding CSA, designed for the North American group Pacific North West Community Supported Agriculture (Personal Communication).

3.6 Methods - Relationship Building

After having determined that a case study of working members at the co-op was feasible, the working members were invited to participate using the techniques of snowballing, networking, and purposive or judgement sampling (Della-Porta & Keating, 2008; Hay & Cope, 2021), based on their current committed volunteering time spent at the co-op. These methods which rely on relational information and conversation amongst known members of a network were easy to employ at the strongly connected network of the co-op. Members were approached in person at the co-op to

formally ask whether interested in participating, and were generally already aware of the nature of the research.

Purposive or judgement sampling in this context was for a vanguard of working members, meaning that the working members approached were to be very committed to volunteering at the co-op, either in the long-term or if more recently, very dedicatedly present at the co-op, and not to be in receipt of wages from the co-op. Although these members have different profiles in terms of length of involvement and hours contributed at the co-op, I was interested in recording the opinions across that diversity. The need to purposefully sample specific subgroups, or wider diversity in terms of gender, culture or age, was considered but abandoned in favour of representing a truer picture of the current range of very committed working members. Their opinions and motivations are of interest because they represent the backbone of how the co-op continues to operate.

The scope of the research was limited to twenty qualitative semi-structured interviews of committed working members at the co-op which were conducted during a two-week period in June 2024. After receiving ethics clearance, the members of the co-op were selected to participate in these one-hour long interviews which were conducted at the co-op. The project setting of the co-op as backdrop for the interview sessions was generally quiet enough to conduct candid and confidential interviews, but sometimes too busy, so the office or storeroom was therefore utilised, as the interview data was collected via audio recording as well as notetaking.

3.7 Methods - Information Gathering

The interviews proceeded in this manner: after the consent forms were signed, we first sat down and the participant information sheet was scanned through. In general, this was quite quickly, as all participants had some prior knowledge of the research question. Because I am also a committed working member of the co-op, I had discussed this research during the year with other co-op members. And when first approaching the twenty participants in person to ask for their help, I had briefly outlined the interview questions and format.

After these forms were signed, there followed a brief discussion of the background research interest in values-led food systems, and the values that the people who engage with them might hold, as well as motivations of participation. And then the interview started, with the first eight open-ended questions which invited discussion about the participant's past and current experiences in membership of the co-op. Following are the eight main discursive questions (see Figure 1). For each

question's further follow-on questions, please see appendix A. The intention of these questions was to elicit some specific responses to, as well as general discussion around food, values, their experiences of the co-op, and the perceived benefits of, and barriers to, membership.

Table 1 Open-ended Interview Questions

1	Why did you first join the co-op?
2	What aspects of the co-op are most important to you?
3	What if anything has changed for you since joining?
4	Do you think your values have changed as a result of being a working member of the food co-op?
5	Thinking back to when you first joined, were there any barriers you had to overcome to being a working member?
6	Can you reflect please on what you perceive as barriers for others in joining the co-op?
7	How much do you think people's values are at play in becoming a member?
8	Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about your food co-op experience, or any reflections about the things we've been talking about today?

Starting the interview with these open-ended questions, rather than demographics, began the dialogue as a conversation, prioritising each individual's experience, and providing rich data to answer the research questions. Starting with conversation seemed polite, and was probably made easier because the participants and I already knew each other. The interview participants generally seemed either glad or amenable that our conversation then continued past the initial eight questions, and were interested and engaged in the following eleven questions (see Figure 2), which were mostly closed-ended and demographic in nature. For the full questions and further follow-on questions, please see appendix A:

Table 2 Demographic Interview Questions

9	Rating the importance of different food values eg. price, taste, env. impacts, fairness, health etc
10	Assessing potential effects of different barriers to accessing foods
11	Where the majority of their food is purchased
12	Where the rest of their food is purchased
13	Schwartz values questions
14	Approximating length of years volunteering at co-op
15	Whether involved previously in other Community Supported Agriculture schemes
16	Whether involved in, or donating to, any food, environment, social or animal justice NGOs
17	Whether time has been or is spent in more natural environments outside of the city
18	Whether involved in food growing for human consumption
19	Whether interested in local foods

The completion of the twenty interviews was satisfying, but a few members were a little disappointed not to have participated, and it would have been wonderful to have had the opportunity to speak with more working members for the sake of the research too. Consideration was then given as to whether hand-transcription of the audio was advisable, though desirable – the time it would have taken to do it myself was approximated at eighty hours, and professional transcription over three thousand dollars, so the transcription was completed with the help of an online voice recognition transcription service. Informants were made aware that they could request copies of the transcript of their interview; if interested could be informed as to what parts of their responses might be used; could re-think their answers and make changes up to a certain date; or could withdraw from the research entirely if desired. They were also assured that their data was unidentifiable and their confidentiality protected, though none seemed particularly concerned about any of this.

A comprehensive initial feedback report was provided to the co-op managers, board and participating members in the spirit of information sharing (see appendix B). This quick report was beneficial to the research also, as it meant engaging with the data straight away. A long or short summary of results and findings will also be shared upon thesis submission, which are hoped to be of some use for future good outcomes at the co-op.

3.8 Research Analysis Techniques

The discussion of interview responses necessitated reflexive thematic discourse analysis of audio transcript to identify narratives surrounding the perceived benefits, values and barriers of

engagement at the co-op (Della-Porta & Keating, 2008; van Dijk, 2015; Hay & Cope, 2021). Wilke's work on food values and Community Supported Agriculture schemes established a background context around values to work with (2022).

First Nation scholars assert that desktop research as much as fieldwork holds requirement for relational accountability - that knowledge is not inanimate but holds agency, power and spirit (Kwaymullina, 2016). The combination of segmentative discourse analysis (Kwaymullina, 2016) and relational accountability, necessitates real sensitivity to participant voice - it is hoped that adherence to the process of iterative relational accountable engagement has eventuated in both respectful, meaningful, collaborative engagement with transcriptions, and purposeful analysis.

The transcriptions were first read and checked for error, then reread again and annotated for thematical coding, grouping informant responses around fifteen common subthemes relating to different motivations, values, barriers and benefits. These subthemes were identified from the interview transcriptions purely by coding the responses, without overt reference to background literature, but no doubt prior reading influenced this coding.

These initial annotations and subcategories were then conceptualised for grouping into five main themes identified for analysis. Careful comparative cross-referencing to connect participants and themes further refined codification as context was gained, and quotable passages reinforcing the themes were chosen as representative of participant feeling (see discussion chapter).

As this research is grounded in the foundational work of human ecology and systems thinking, variables were extrapolated along the way from themes identified in the data and applied to nine human ecology systems diagrams (see appendix D). These causal diagrams were developed to model feedback interactions of complex socio-ecological problems. They help make connections between variables more visible, and enable the identification of leverage points for possible interventions in feedback loops, to create change in the behaviour of social structures (Dyball, 2023; Meadows, 1999; Proust & Newell, 2020).

In the context of this research, modelling different ideas arising from the interviews helped make possible the identification of the kinds of opportunities and relationships that these systems operating at different scales might need (see discussion chapter). The transcriptions were again reread and or listened to during the creation of these models, further enabling deeper listening and

understanding. At the conclusion of the research a deductive analysis of the findings applying human ecology as analysis methodology was undertaken to verify theories, and comparisons made with other food values data (Christensen, 2014; Davila, 2019; Dyball & Newell, 2023; Wilkes, 2022).

3.9 Conclusion

The desired outcome of this research is an understanding of how the co-op food network affects its members; any wider environmental sustainability and social justice aspects that membership promotes; and the identification of potential pathways and barriers to greater solidarity-led bioregional food procurement behaviours. Understanding how people make the necessary shift to changing set patterns of behaviour answering short-term interests, over to food procurement outwardly appearing less convenient, but which support their values and longer-term self-interests, along with the broader community and environmental interests, could help inform the transition of others to these practices.

Better understanding the barriers to and benefits of co-op membership could help greater participation in these or similar systems, and might be helpful in identifying opportunities for the proliferation of the sort of solidarity-led food networks that hold closer relationships between farmers and members, and to define future work in supporting such systems (Davila, 2019; Dyball & Newell, 2023; Wilkes, 2022).

The research methodology and methods chosen here reaffirms the relational ethics of care that underlines the community spirit present at the co-op as normative practice. First Nations scholars write that Indigenous methodologies are not only a means to an end, but are end in themselves (Corntassel & Hardbarger, 2019; Simpson, 2014). The participants active within the co-op community do use a paradigmatic practice of relational ethics of care, so any research conducted there as an insider was bound to be relational and accountable. That this research used relational co-design is important in its own right, and meant that participating co-op members feel a certain amount of investment, ownership and care for the project.

The following results and discussion section examines the themes that emerged from the co-op interviews, and explores the potential connection of relational practices to the rhizomatic proliferation of self-organising solidarity-based food systems (Ganz, 2000; 2024; Boarder-Giles, 2021; Kaomea, 2016; Spicer et al, 2019).

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

As previously noted, the conventional food system is unjust, unsustainable and does not feed the world's hungry, but is defended on the grounds that it provides unprecedented convenience, choice and cheapness. It seems to be absolutist, that only a fringe minority would readily make a switch to something less comfortable. This research examines the potential of solidarity-based, bioregional food systems as leverages for change, via case study research undertaken at the co-op - a living laboratory of some who do readily forego, and find that the benefits far outweigh the negatives. The study of human ecology emphasises that the dominant system of production and consumption exists at a nexus of socio-ecological challenges, and that a paradigmatic shift to biosensitive institutions that can support both humanity and earth systems is required. To examine how biosensitivity could proliferate through values-led food procurement a discussion follows of why twenty current working members of the co-op, a self-organising biosensitive food network, first joined; what they do and don't get out of it; and whether their values may have changed over time.

This chapter first presents analysis results as tables, then discusses findings by revisiting the twenty participants and their five strongly and commonly expressed ideas, or themes, contained within the conversations. These key themes – values, ethics, food choices, space, and barriers and enablers - are examined, and some representative verbatim quotes from the recordings presented. The next section examines the use of human ecology systems diagrams in analysing the interview data, the application of which provided insights around barriers and public space.

The chapter concludes with a discussion of those themes in the literature, and comparison with the broader issues and change pathways previously discussed in chapter two, the literature review of this thesis. Drawing from this, it seems that the working members of the co-op share similar sentiments to those documented in the literature, confirming that their co-op has become centrally important in their lives.

4.2 Data and Findings

Before undertaking a thematic analysis of the data, each recorded interview conversation was revisited in turn. Giving each unique voice space and consideration before jumping into a discussion of themes, lessens the potential violence of dismemberment that can occur when quotes are

abstracted from context (Adams, 1990; Perley, 2010). While the twenty interviews form a longer moving conversation, for the participants each interview was unto itself, and each person's perspective on the co-op was given representation and consideration before employing reiterative deep listening. As many participants indicated an interest in the outcomes of the interviews, an initial feedback report was supplied to all participants and co-op board members soon after the interview sessions concluded (appendix B).

The first part of each semi-structured interview was built around eight open-ended questions, and the second part of the interview contained eleven closed-ended questions (for full interview questions, see methodology chapter and appendix A). Reflexive thematic analysis of participant responses was undertaken through careful review of the recordings and transcriptions, the overall framing of responses to the first eight open-ended questions, and the demographic data. Fifteen initial major subthemes were tabled into five dominant themes (see table 3). The transcriptions were revisited a number of times to doublecheck for validity, and to gather representative quotes for discussion further on in this chapter.

Table 3 Fifteen sub-themes, five themes - thematic coding of the co-op interviews 2024

Main Themes:	**Values**	**Ethics**	**Food Choices**	**Space**	**Barriers & Enablers**
Sub-themes:	Participant values have changed	Food Sovereignty, Food Justice, Fair-trade, Local foods	Vegetarian	Community, Friendships, Conviviality	Enablers, eg. discounts, feeling helpful
	Participant values have not changed	Environment, Ecosystem health, Biodiversity, Climate, Food miles, Organic and regenerative agriculture	Health, Organic and spray free produce	Public-spaces, Political space	Barriers, eg. shyness, time, finances
	Participant values are supported by co-op	Circular systems, Bulk foods, Waste, Packaging, Frugalism, Voluntary Simplicity	Nutrition, Local foods	Not-For-Profits, Co-operatives	Perceived barriers for others, eg. white space, closed community

The construction of a table of brief summaries of the overall framings of each participant response around the first eight open-ended questions was undertaken but abandoned as too limiting and reductive in its brevity. A more full summary of each participant's responses to these eight questions are included in appendix C, and feature in the following discussion of themes. Also taken into consideration there are the responses to two open-ended sub-questions contained within questions fourteen and nineteen. Question fourteen asked whether the participant had any suggestions for ways that the co-op could do better. And question nineteen, the last question, asked whether the participant is interested in locally produced foods and if so, why. Because the eleven close-ended questions were asked aloud as part of a conversation, rather than answered quickly in a questionnaire, they also provoked conversation and reflection, which added further qualitative insight as well as demographic information.

Table 4 records the data collected from the interview's eleven closed-ended questions. Participants were asked to rate on a 5 point scale the importance of considerations around their food choices and their ability to access food in line with those values; where they procured their foods; how long they have been volunteering at the co-op; whether they have been involved with any other food, justice or environment issues in the past; whether they spend time in nature outside of urban settings; whether they grow any foods; whether they feel a sense of closeness with farmers or would like to; and whether they are interested in local foods. Participants were also asked their preferred pronouns, and age brackets. The table expresses these findings by conflating the top and bottom two answers either side of neutral to get a yes or no answer for questions nine and ten, and listing quantitative data for the remainder.

Table 4 Demographics and data from closed-ended questions

Closed ended Questions							
9. Rating the importance of different values around foods question sequence	Price Yes = 6 No = 5 Neutral = 8	Taste Yes = 17 No = 0 Neutral = 3	Convenience Yes = 2 No = 10 Neutral = 8	Fairness Yes = 15 No = 0 Neutral = 5	Environmental impacts Yes = 18 No = 0 Neutral = 2	Health Nutrition Yes = 18 No = 1 Neutral = 1	
	Food Origin Yes = 12 No = 1 Neutral = 7	Animal Welfare Yes = 16 No = 2 Neutral = 1	Tradition Yes = 9 No = 6 Neutral = 5	Familiarity Yes = 2 No = 11 Neutral = 7	Production methods Yes = 15 No = 1 Neutral = 4	Novelty Yes = 3 No = 9 Neutral = 8	

Closed ended Questions							
10. Ability to access food in line with values question sequence	Food in line with values is important Yes = 17 No = 1 Neutral = 2	Easily accessing food in line with values Yes = 15 No = 2 Neutral = 3	Can make informed choices about foods Yes = 16 No = 3 Neutral = 1	Finances limiting values-led foods Yes = 7 No = 9 Neutral = 4	Time limiting values-led food choices Yes = 6 No = 13 Neutral = 1		
11. Where majority of foods procured	Co-op = 7	Supermarket = 4	CSA scheme = 3	Markets = 4	Growing = 1	Grocery stores = 1	
12. Where rest of foods procured	Co-op = 13	Supermarket = 12	CSA Scheme = 0	Markets = 10	Growing = 15	Grocery stores = 8	And = 8*
13. Schwartz basic human values question sequence	See appendix A footnote addressing excised data						
14. Years of Co-op Volunteering Membership	Over 20 years = 5	Between 5 and 15 years = 7	Around 4 years = 3	Less than 2 years = 5			
15. Prior involvement in Community Supported Agriculture	Yes = 5 No = 15						
16. Supports social, environment, animal, or food justice NGOs	Yes = 17 No = 3						
17. Spends time in natural environments outside of the city	Yes = 20						
18. Involved in growing food	Yes = 20						
+ Feels close to farmers who produce their foods	Yes = 12 No = 8						
+ Would like to feel close to those farmers	Yes = 20						
19. Interested in local foods	Yes = 20						
Age Groupings	20 – 30 yrs = 4	31 – 40 yrs = 5	41 – 50 yrs = 2	51 – 60 yrs = 6	61 – 70 yrs = 2	Over 70 yrs = 1	
Pronouns	He/Him = 4	She/Her = 16					

* = gifts and swaps

Other interesting demographic data collated from the interview process, not directly asked by the close-ended questions, but which were issues addressed by all participants included vegetarianism; other involvements at the ANU; interests in not-for-profits and cooperatives in general; interest in community-led public spaces; and involvement in food procurement strategies outside of monetary exchange - which are addressed in the following section, analysis of the themes.

4.3 Analysis of Themes

The following section is organised into the five themes coded from the interview data: Values, Ethics, Food, Space, and Barriers and Enablers. Each theme covers the relevant data which arose in subthemes and contains representative quotes collated from across the twenty interview transcriptions, with most participant's responses covering multiple themes in their interviews (see appendix C). Relistening to the interview recordings for transcription reveals that the general manner of most of the interviews was more like easy conversation between colleagues and friends about shared interests and concerns, than strictly a series of semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. Given my own insider involvement in the co-op and relationship with the participants, this makes sense in a context of dialogical phronetic research (Flyvbjerg, 2001), and adaptive theory (Layder, 2013). There were occasions during the interviews where I found myself being overly responsive, even chatty, because within the turns that the conversations took, things came up that seemed at the time too important (in regards to co-op matters) not to address, so I had to catch myself in order that the questions did not seem leading.

Conducting the conversations on site, in the space about which the questions focus, undoubtedly too influenced the interviews and data (Hay & Cope, 2021). Some interviews were conducted while the participant was also undertaking their co-op shift duties. These conversations were often interrupted, and it is interesting to hear the clatter of daily co-op life going on in the background of the recordings. They contain the sounds of delivery interruptions, and of the serving of customers, and of friends saying hello – the daily social life of the co-op shaping interview responses. Seven of the interviews were conducted in the office space, as the co-op social space was too busy, and three of the interviews took place in the storage room perched atop of crates, as the office was already in use.

Theme 1. Values

Overall, the participating food co-op working members reiterated that their pre-existent values and reasons for first joining the co-op remain unchanged, though have been strengthened by their ongoing volunteering at the co-op:

> 'I like to think that they've [values] kind of deepened…I think I had these values before, but I didn't know how to practice them…I've learned here….I'm glad that I haven't had to compromise on my values' (participant 002420).

Their values around food, and food at the co-op specifically in the main indicated that being part of a community practicing solidarity-based food procurement enables them to be

> 'more radical in my way of thinking about food and food systems' (participant 002415).

Many participants repeated similar statements to 'what I love about the co-op is the alignment of food and values', and that working at the co-op gives them a strengthened sense of identity (participant 002406).

Participants seemed engaged, and on common ground when talking about their values in relation to food, but even more engaged when widening their remarks to include other values around justice, nature, and politics, and community itself as a value, and as valuable was also a meaningful area of discussion among most participants. This is important as it provides strong reinforcement that active values are crucial to the flourishing of biosensitivity, as the literature suggests (Wilkes, 2022).

However, some participants had some differing interpretations around the definition of values. There were instances during the interviews where my own desire to attempt clarification of what the question had meant to convey was overridden – because the participant's own way of interpreting the questions, and then the responses, were more interesting than that they had 'understood' the question. One participant who definitely did understand the question, and wanted to say that they like the feeling at the co-op - that the space is open for all to navigate without pressure, sharing laughter and food, but strongly suggested that

> 'we shouldn't use values to differentiate people – how do we understand and co-exist with people who share different values?...different histories and values, but everyone can be here drinking tea – how do we use what we have to bring people together?' (participant 002416).

All participants stated that values certainly play an important part for others in becoming a member of the co-op:

> 'the vibe is definitely values – people see themselves as having values' (participant 002417).

One participant said that they have 'realised that you can't force the co-op down people's throats…if someone wants the co-op they will find the co-op' (participant 002411). The idea that committed working members cannot in reality be persuaded to join the co-op but must through their own

volition find their way there, extends to thoughts around the management roles also. Since in recent years management positions have been renumerated financially, when these roles become vacant, they are advertised externally on the ethical-jobs website. Sometimes the positions are filled by existing co-op members, who come to the role with a priori knowledge of the co-op and its values, operations, and idiosyncrasies. Managers who have not come to the co-op in this way, may in theory like the concept of working at the co-op, but can struggle to orient themselves in what might be quite a different space, and sometimes do not choose to stay very long in the role – not very conducive to the relational resilience of this food network. The many more who have stayed longer enjoy the alignment of conviviality and values of this biosensitive food network.

Theme 2. Ethics

This theme brings together the conversational threads around food justice, food sovereignty, fair trade and local foods; the environment and food miles, regenerative agriculture practices, biodiversity and climate; and the issues around waste, packaging, and buying in bulk. Many participants asserted that the wide array of options that the co-op provides to handle food waste, compost, free foods, the use of one's own jars and containers, the ability to purchase in small amounts, and the provision for collective deposit to external options of various container-recycling schemes is important to them. And all but two of these committed co-op working members stated that they had initially joined the co-op with reasons around the environment and sustainability in mind. They have a high level of education in these aspects of the food system, and in some ways those ethical foundations underpinning the co-op and their values seemed a given for them - their answers around these questions were often short, offhand and given as though they had all sorted out where they stood with those issues a while back:

> 'I think that coming to the co-op…my…motivation was about how humans can survive the climate crisis, the co-op as a community space really brought together lots of different issues around justice for all kinds of people…and I think that before…I wasn't as aware of…the importance of First Nations justice and…what practices and processes we need to have to make it possible for really everyone to participate and…there being more space for voices, more space for people whose voices are excluded or silenced or not taken as seriously. Yeah. That's been a big thing' (participant 002420).

However, two participants who had first come to the co-op with their primary values being around not-for-profits and co-operatives rather than the environment or food systems, did not mention environmental considerations at all, other than in the closed-ended questions, possibly because of

their high investment in other political issues. The closed-ended questions confirmed that all respondents were unsurprisingly concerned about the effect of industrial food production upon the health of people, animals, and the environment, but with most participants emphasising food sovereignty or food justice, and small-scale agriculture that tries to avert injustice and environmental harms. All participants spend time in nature outside of cities, and most are also either involved with, or donate to, justice and environmental campaigns. This high level of active understanding suggests that an underpinning of ethics is crucial to the healthy functioning of biosensitive institutions (Dyball & Newell, 2023), of which the co-op is one.

Theme 3. Food

In their responses around food choices, some working members did enjoy expounding on the different lentils or other products that they can purchase at the co-op, but most focused on the shared meals instead, while others lent less importance to this aspect of the co-op, reiterating that the community or politics at the co-op is their main interest. This theme is around the aspects of health, nutrition, locally grown or home-grown foods, organic or spray-free foods, and vegetarianism.

Participants overall expressed that they do have an interest in nutritious foods, and felt that the co-op offered them a way to procure healthy foods that also align with their ethics and values around food justice, sustainability, and waste and packaging. Most participants felt that their food choices have probably changed over time with the influence of being at the co-op:

> 'I can't even remember what I ate before coming here. I don't think I ate that well. I definitely didn't eat lentils much' (participant 002420).

Participant 002407 pointed out that there are 'acceptable negatives' for co-op members in their food procurements – tolerances that also came up for Cox et al (2008), finding that communication between members brings about new understandings, commitment, tolerance and radical consumption changes.

Interestingly, like other participatory community spaces in Australia (eg. CERES in Melbourne and Perth City Farm), the co-op has a garden space, which three participants stated factored strongly in their decisions to join. This opportunity to grow within an urban, shopping context allows members to share the bounty, affording another alternative economy opportunity.

All participants of this case study state that their co-op memberships support their interest in local foods, and closer relationships with the growers of their region. The foundational premise of the food sovereignty movement is that 'changing the food system starts with changing the way we view farmers' (a growing culture, 2024). Participants commented that their awareness and preference for ethical food has increased as a result of working at the co-op. Many members are now more invested in local foods; two limiting their dairy after learning more about the costs of dairy; five are now more interested in buying organic; eight members commented they now buy much less processed, prepackaged foods and eat more healthily; another two that they now eat more seasonally; and eleven that they are much more open to trying new foods. One member commented that they now have an appreciation of spices and seasonings, and an understanding of cookery as a result of helping the chefs in the kitchen.

While the co-op does not advertise itself as a vegetarian outlet, when there has occasionally been a member raising the issue over the years - about whether to stock 'ethical meat' – the debate has been quickly quashed. Most participants mentioned at least in passing their either long-term or new-found interest in plant-based foods, though none emphasised here the centrality of animal rights in their decisions around involvement - perhaps only though because it goes unsaid for those for whom it is. Four members were already vegan or vegetarian upon joining; eight are now cooking more vegetarian or vegan; half of the participants report eating a great deal more plant-based foods as a result of being involved at the co-op; and one participant reports changing to being vegetarian entirely because of the co-op lunches. Only four participants reported no change at all in their diets as a consequence of co-op membership. This confirms that a high level of interest in one's own and family's health and nutrition is an important motivator in the transition to a values-led food network (Mihrshahi et al, 2020).

Theme 4. Space

This theme brings together responses around community, friendships and belonging; the importance of public space and political awareness; and the diverse economies and participatory democracies of not-for-profits and cooperatives. There was almost ubiquitous agreement in participant responses that community and conviviality has become of central importance - these is just one example from the interviews of this strong sense of community and collective decision-making:

> 'being part of a community that cares collectively, who are willing to work together to create something better [in a] space where people can put ideas

> into practice….doing what you said you'd do and thinking of the co-op – how its going, what it needs and sharing the values of co-operation…it's a considerate place, thoughtful of the planet and ourselves….where profits are saved rather than making someone else rich….and experiment in how to make decisions collectively…many people's minds working together [is] satisfying to overcome the challenges of conflict, cockroaches and finances...the co-op is a special place in what can be an industrialised, exploitative, extractive, numb world' (participant 002420).

These committed working members also have recognised that their sense of belonging to the co-op space itself is of high importance for them:

> '[this] rare social space without necessarily buying stuff…[that has] warmth and is also intangible, magical' (participant 002404).

Overall, most participant's responses focused also around their felt sense of importance about the generalised concept of co-operatives, not-for-profits, and diverse economies – their enjoyment of the co-op gathering space brought realisation for many participants that such public spaces are not so common in Canberra:

> '[its] a not-for-profit co-operative…there are so few public spaces not around profit-making' (participant 002414).

Most participants felt good about belonging to a co-operative community which interrelates with their own expressed values, ethics and food choices, and which helps them practice those values:

> 'I guess regularly being around other people who are making those changes in their life and regularly being around people who choose to shop in this way and who are also doing the same things, it normalises those things for you and makes them more achievable. I guess it makes them feel more achievable or less strange' (participant 002415).

Cox et al (2008) found that CSA members through their interactions over food exchange information around political and ethical issues more generally, and this is a feature of life at the co-op too, as broadly discussed by participants. But because the co-op is more place-based than CSA schemes, the existing, inhabited, shared, and politically-loaded space offers more opportunities for these exchanges, while also perhaps prefiguring new member conceptions of the interactions that they can expect to encounter there -perhaps influencing too who might potentially join – and what information might then be exchanged. Already existent shared values and political affiliations could figure in the increasing, deepening and strengthening of those same values of which many participants spoke.

Theme 5. Barriers / Enablers

This theme sets out how participants framed their responses around their thoughts on the barriers and enablers to co-op membership. Some participants felt that the barriers to belonging and contributing at the co-op might be around initial feelings of discomfort or exclusion because of a perception of the co-op as a chaotic, dynamic space with an 'alternative, cliquey, niche demographic' (participant 002412). But most participants felt that the main enabler in their initial involvements at the co-op, and what would also be enabling for others, is the relational ethics of care and kindness practiced at the co-op: 'there is lots of that here, and elsewhere it is hard to find…its not encouraged elsewhere, but here you can be' (participant 002413).

Not many participants in any depth discussed time and money as potential barriers to food procurement at the co-op. While some participants did mention the financial discounts that volunteering brings as being useful, or even essential to their food procurement, others felt the discounts negligible. One participant qualified their demographic response to how important price is in regards to their food choices, both as of very high importance and also as not at all important - because they are able to mitigate its importance with their agency of procurement (growing, and dumpster-diving):

> 'a certain amount of money is needed to survive, which means not enough time to participate…a certain mentality is needed to make money to survive…its tricky figuring out what you really do and don't need. If you can, you can have more community and time' (participant 002420).

Other participants also thought that some things which might initially feel like barriers translate to learnt transferrable skills (see also Levkoe, 2006) and enablers. They compared the civic participation of helping out in soup kitchens to the co-op kitchen, with its heat and rush and enacted values, bringing about an appreciation of other cultures and other's contributions (the cooks,

servers, dishwashers etc), and perhaps engaging in participatory, democratic organising and decision-making while making new friends along the way (participant 002405).

> ‘‘I think I got a lot of skills because when I first started, I was really, like, a bit anxious and nervous and didn't…have confidence to, like, talk to people or to figure stuff out as much as I do now…I think that personally, I got so many skills…people skills and problem solving skills and time management skills and conflict resolution skills through…feeling so invested that when a problem did come up, I didn't want to step away. I wanted to figure it out. Yeah. So I've learned a lot as a person’ (participant 002420).

4.4 Human Ecology Systems Diagrams Analysis

Further deductive analysis applying human ecology causal diagrams to the interview themes was undertaken to investigate theories. Systems diagrams, and the cultural adaptation templates of human ecology (Dyball & Newell, 2023), are designed to identify feedbacks and leverage points for change in complex socio-ecological systems. For this research, three influence diagrams and twelve systems diagrams were created using variables from the five thematic codes previously discussed. These causal diagrams were initially generated on paper by hand, and nine were further developed with the vensim computer modelling program (see appendix D). The three more complex systems diagrams - attempts to link separate themes and explore feedbacks between themes – would be more time-consuming to generate with the computer program, and have not been included here.

These causal diagrams were used to visualise interactions and relationships between the more common themes expressed by participants, so as to clarify ideas around where possible opportunities for ongoing and increased solidarity-based food procurement behaviours and networks could lie. The use of human ecology systems diagram analysis in this case-study context was intended to make apparent the opportunities and relationships that networks such as the co-op operating at different scales might need (Deutsch et al, 2013; Dyball & Newell, 2023). Flyvbjerg (2001) asserts there is usefulness in extrapolating generalised knowledge from specific, context-dependent case-studies - because in the field of human affairs there is only context-dependent knowledge, and case-study analysis is transferrable (see also Hay & Cope, 2021).

The outcome of modelling systems diagrams from this interview data mainly generated several diagrams of reinforcing feedbacks loops, in which solidarity-based co-operatives and their

proliferation were shown to bring about ever increasing wellbeing - one of the core arguments of this thesis, though revealing nothing new. However, the process itself of creating heuristic visual devices to model motivations and obstacles to membership, enabled the early and quite clear identification of lack of public space as main barrier to the proliferation of solidarity-based food co-operatives. Figure 2, a basic reinforcing feedback loop, illustrates that with the addition of the external variable, limits to public space, the proliferation of co-operatives is stymied – the implications of normative restrictions to accessible public spaces means that over time, the flourishing of both convivial communities and bioregional food systems is compromised.

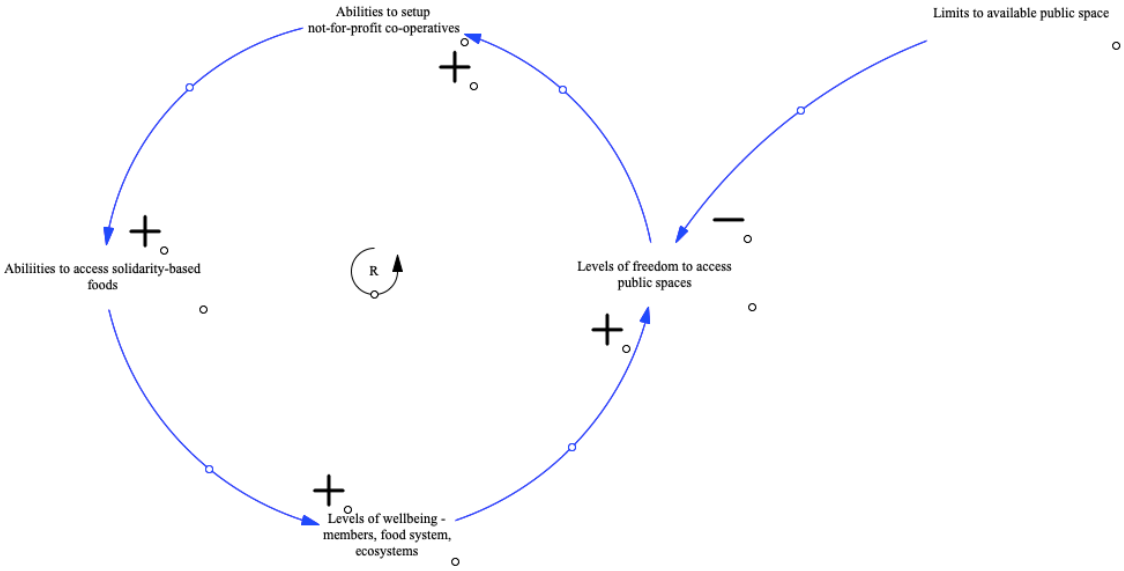

Figure 2 Basic reinforcing feedback loop with the external variable of limits to public space

4.5 Holistic Analysis

This chapter has presented results and examined findings around the five themes identified in the interview data with the help of quotes from participants, and addressed the application of systems diagrams as analysis to those themes. The following section summarises, reflects, and explores implications, firstly by applying Wilkes' categories of participation in values-led food systems (2022); then in a discussion around frugality and voluntary simplicity; and next by exploring how values

relate to conviviality and the use of space, in conjunction with the opportunities for a proliferation of biosensitive food networks.

Part of this study's results are conveyed in line with Wilkes' four categories of perceived reasons for initiating and continuing participation at the Community Supported Agriculture scheme, Canberra Southern Harvest:

> Instrumental reasons: Focus on achieving a specific aim, often relating to the food itself or the process of acquiring it, in which the benefits primarily accrue to the respondent and are typically tangible or direct.
>
> Values-based reasons: Focus on better aligning practices with values, or actual self with ideal self, rather than focusing on a specific tangible output or discrete ends. These tend to be centered on identity rather than materials.
>
> Relational reasons: Focus on connections with other entities involved in the CSA, where the emphasis is the relationship between things rather than the things themselves.
>
> Systemic reasons: Relate to reasons beyond the individuals involved and typically include a conscious effort to influence the broader system (p.130).

As Wilkes found in their research, the co-op interview participants often covered multiple reasons in their interviews as to why they had begun, and why they continue to participate at the co-op, so that these categories were not always mutually exclusive (p.130, Wilkes, 2022). Coding therefore was based on the dominant framings that participants used, to capture what seemed to be the main motivations expressed (Appendix C summarises the framing found for each participant of this case study). Here is what was found in relation to Wilkes' four categories of participation. Thirteen participants listed instrumental-based reasons as primary in their initial involvement at the co-op. These instrumental reasons ranged from values-led food procurement (10), to joining the roof-top gardening group (3). Three participants wanted a good place to practice their English language skills. Secondary relational reasons for joining were: ten wanted community, ten were introduced by friends, and five came via the daily cooked lunches. Ten were new to Canberra, and three had parents who had already been members. But all twenty of these working members conveyed a sense of systemic reasoning in having sought out the co-op. There were two members who overwhelmingly conveyed that those systemic reasons were their primary reason for joining - and

systemic reasons remain their priority (002405 and 002420). Three members listed values-led reasons as their main factor in joining – these were around 'contributing to collective action' (002401); circular systems (002413); and not-for-profits (002419). The two members who joined from the start for relational reasons continue to hold relational reasons as primary in their continuing (002402 and 002410). Thirteen other members also emphasise relational reasons for continuing. No participants emphasised instrumental reasons for why they continue in their membership. One member who began with instrumental reasons now considers themselves to more hold values-led reasons for staying on (002406), and four others maintain systemic reasoning as their foundational purpose (002405; 002413; 002417 and 002420).

As discussed in the thematic analysis, overwhelmingly participants describe their reasons for sticking with the co-op and for their increasing involvement as volunteers, to relational ones. Mostly participants spoke of their friendships, the community, of working together and of sharing food, with the social space itself also very appreciated. This appreciation in general of public gathering spaces was also listed as a systemic reason for ongoing working membership. The desire to see the success of co-operatives in general was another systemic reason often named. And other values-led but systemic reasons included environmental concerns and food justice concerns.

Most of these working members did not make much of their food procurement in regards to factoring heavily in ongoing benefits of membership, though they did when stating their reasons for first joining. This could be construed to be because they have come over time to take the ability to consistently source solidarity-based foods for granted, with the more recent working members interviewed continuing to list food procurement as reasons for ongoing involvement. Several participants reported that they enjoyed feeling purposeful, one participant naming their underlying desire to volunteer in general and 'to be useful', as their overall reason for membership. So most participants over time experience an ongoing passage of changing categories of reason for being at the co-op - as their initial needs are met and then grow with and from their ongoing involvements. From primarily instrumental and underlying systemic reasons for joining, to those of primarily relational and systemic in their continued participation with a community of people who mostly share similar values around food procurement.

It seems that these co-op working members all have a baseline sense of systemic responsibility at play in their motivations around food procurement and co-op membership. They do not so much emphasise the role of the instrumental value of food procurement as main motivation to stay on at

the co-op - instead citing the relational values of community and shared space. Perhaps over the years, answering their solidarity-based food procurement needs by creating community with others of the same bent, members might find that their desire to take further action on the systemic issues that prompted their membership are mollified. But the constant ebb and flow of new and old members, and the emergent nature of the self-organising social aspects of the co-op ensures that the co-op does not have opportunity to stagnate.

This corresponds with the work of Carolan (2017) who found that co-op members joined food networks in 'singlemindedness' (p.216), and garnered more systemic collective awareness along the way. But whereas Carolan's findings indicate that those members also had predominantly joined with existing relational values as priority, the case-study at the co-op has found that for most members their experiences there have emphasised or created stronger relational and community values, after having initially joined for more instrumental reasons.

> 'Now its almost entirely social…primarily social…its not about cheap oats anymore' (participant 002412).

While it might have been interesting to be able to gauge an income demographic of working members, the idea of asking these friends about their income wasn't feasible. So in regards to finances, whether these working members exercise frugality voluntarily or through necessity remains to be seen. There was quite a lot of disparity in participant responses about how important or not the financial discounts of working membership were to their volunteering, with some finding them very significant, and others seeming dismissive of them having much impact upon shopping bills. In regards to frugality or simplicity practices at the co-op around product-choice, over the years the variety of for instance expensive imported chocolate items has considerably increased...

For people who make an ongoing choice to live in voluntary simplicity around their systemic values, over time this exercise might become somewhat cyclical. Decisions made to live simply, or to forego, may extend to wider life choices and money-making situations, and then simplicity is no longer a matter of choice, but an ongoing lifestyle of frugality – hopefully a happy one. But poverty without community, land and natural resources, and self-determination is not an idyll of beautiful frugality

and voluntary simplicity, but austerity (Corntassel & Hardbarger, 2020; Jackson & Jenson, 2022; Khorana, 2018).

The frugalism, or voluntary simplicity, inherently practiced by co-op members acting upon their values and to be found in food procurement at the co-op is made stronger and deeper with repetition over time. This inventive necessity of love, care and thrift extends into other aspects of life, and also to other means of finding ways to share and exchange foods. There is a connection between this type of convivial community and its relational practices of care around foods that is found at the co-op, to the potential rhizomatic proliferation of other such self-organising values-led food networks (Ganz, 2000; 2024; Boarder-Giles, 2021; Kaomea, 2016; Levkoe, 2006; Paradies, 2020; Spicer et al, 2019).

This research was based on an informed assumption that values are an inherent part of people's decision-making around food choices, and that in becoming part of a solidarity-based food co-operative, working members seek to enact these values (Dyball & Newell, 2023; Wilkes, 2022). But not every respondent followed along with the easy use of that assumption. Participant 002416 questioned the effectiveness of merely sharing the same values in 'coming together to get things done'; that in fact one's personal values ought not be the basis for co-operative action or of making community; because we must co-exist with people who have different values. Their sentiment of the co-op being important because of the open space it provides where 'people of different histories and values can come together to share laughter and food' is echoed in much of the literature around food, cooking and conviviality in Australia (Hossieni, 2023; Khorana, 2018).

While participant 002416 strongly enunciated their scepticism of the usefulness of values as binding strategy for a co-op community, which seems on the surface very different from the way other respondents framed their ideas around shared values and principles, their response cannot be easily labelled as outlier. Most of the longer serving participants expressed that their primary reasons for continuing to contribute at the co-op have changed over the years. Enacting their individual values, and even their hopes for systemic change - the reasons that had brought them to the co-op originally - have evolved over time to become enmeshed within almost completely relational reasons for their continued dedicated volunteering. So, there are elements of resonance with this feeling that self-determined values must or should remain personal, because space place and time are contingent,

dictates community, and individuals are subsumed within the larger entity that is the co-op community (Boarder-Giles, 2021). Other participant responses about their sense that the space itself changes one's ways of being, in and outside of the co-op, could indicate that being in community levels out more or less strongly felt values and principles in the shared pragmatic physicality of the co-op (Boarder-Giles, 2021; Levkoe, 2006).

Participant 002416's questioning of values-led membership as necessary to being part of the co-op community helps underline that the co-op space itself is integral to what enables this community. Most participants expressed their appreciation of the informal community space as one of the main benefits of the co-op, with two participants suggesting that another food co-op in Canberra on the southside is what is needed for the community to flourish. Space as resource dictates limits to growth, and as the co-op occupies only a certain space, and does not subscribe to evermoreism (Boyden, 2004), overcoming barriers only to enable ever more membership in that space does not answer the question of how to adequately provide opportunity for the substantial number of Australians who share similar values to those one percent who alone currently procure their foods in solidarity-based ways (Wilkes 2022).

But there is a lack of freely accessible public space in which to create new solidarity-based food procurement networks (Boarder-Giles, 2021; Hayes, 2020; Khorana, 2018; Lyons et al, 2013). Both food co-operatives and farms require spaces in which to grow, process and distribute foods within the existing market-based framework. It is harder than ever to imagine how such a movement as the co-op would find the space today to start up - as participant 002419 said ' …

> 'founding something like this now would be more difficult…the co-op is not easily duplicated because of market conditions….something like the co-op, as a student initiative which broadened to the community, just wouldn't get up again'.

And so it is hard also to imagine how a network of place-based cooperatives could easily proliferate. Instead, this lack of available spaces has created the need for some of these twenty working members to look outside, or to the peripheries, of the system for ways of enacting their values and creating community around food solidarity. Most participants reported their growing, swapping and gifting of foods, seeds and plants, with some relying more and more on these networks of non-monetary exchange. Two participants report they now rely heavily on the procurement of foods through such avenues as dumpster diving, and others are involved as volunteers interested in diverse

economies such as food-not-bombs, utilising foods that the global system deems as waste (Boarder-Giles, 2021). However, these avenues of solidarity-based food procurement do not provide for convivial communal gathering place-based spaces.

Nick Hayes (2020) writing on public rights to space and all manner of various enclosures, posits that the division of space, or the way it is constructed, mapped, designed and compartmentalised, has direct influence on those operating within it - affecting their habits, customs and ideologies - what is allowed, encouraged and forbidden. The built environment creates both physical vagrancy and moral vagrancy - of acceptable behaviours and norms. Hayes goes on to explain some dimensions of the ideas of Lefebvre and Foucault around spatial politics as being the central theme of modernity:

> Social space is a social product…the space thus produced also serves as a tool of thought and of action…a means of control, and hence of domination, of power (p. 273).

Khorana suggests that spatial and social justice in Australia is inhibited by class structures and the inequitable planning and distribution of urban infrastructure (2018; also Boarder-Giles, 2021; and Jou, 2017). This creates monocultures where place-making, interactions with cultural others, and spaces for conviviality are unlikely (2018). Convivial resistance and place-making turns spaces into community hubs with an 'affective sense of place' (p. 3), creating opportunities for conviviality (2018; see also Lyons et al, 2013). Placemaking, according to Khorana using context from the American Project for Public Spaces (PPS, 2009), is defined by how much the people who use a space as vital community resource feature in its identity, creation and maintenance (2018). Khorana states that this brings about pride in community, the promotion of sustainable food practices, and opportunities for connection in inclusive conviviality (2018). As one key member of the co-op community put it to me in an informal discussion about the occasional internal disputes over politicised messaging at the co-op: the background walls of artworks, banners, flags and slogans is the soul of the co-op, and without it the place would just be a bulk foods shop.

Khorana (2018) writing on inter-cultural food and social enterprises in Australia posits that diverse communities practicing a food sovereignty approach empower particularly refugee people to rightful cultural practices around foods, while creating social value rather than profit. Just as at the co-op, these networks build trust and community ties around convivial food sharing, participants

> sharing their food with the community, and then are out there serving it, talking about it. So this creates social engagement. There are natural conversations that emerge as a consequence of that (p. 62).

This is exactly how lunch looks at any given day at the co-op. Khorana suggests that these 'politicised participations in conviviality' (p. 64) lead society away from a superficial celebration of diversity which effaces the precarity of refugee people, to dialogues which start over meals and progress to mutual care and practical solidarity (2018). Initial reticence around the newness of experiences encountered, or of practicing one's values in a public space can be overcome, because

> Our ability to dance with complexity and chaos, even if awkwardly at first, under-scores the emergent experimentation desperately needed to find new routes to our possible futures (p. 45, Suppiah et al, 2022).

This strategy of inquiry has applied deep listening to a thematic interpretation of the five threads found in these twenty testimonies of some of the committed working members of one solidarity-based food system. They hold a clear assertion that the love and care experienced in community, and the friendships shared whilst working together for common goals and values is foundational to the co-op's functioning and flourishing. They also strongly suggest that an existing connection to theories, ideas, and other communities with similar values that the co-op holds is what initially brings people inside the doors, and convivial community is what keeps their resolve to holding those values strongly in other spaces.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This research is underpinned by the knowledge that many individuals seek to find ideal approaches in their own lives with which to effect wider change in the currently unjust and unsustainable global food system. A small case-study investigating how committed working members at the food co-op feel about their membership and food procurement identified that overwhelmingly most assert being part of a self-organising biosensitive community deepens and strengthens their pre-existing values. They state that their ongoing involvement in a community of care gives them a strong sense of health and wellbeing, and more political awareness around food, environment and justice, along with a greater sense that the impacts around their food choices do matter.

For the movement going forward, while there are certainly real barriers to the proliferation of similar solidarity-based food networks because of a lack of freely available and accessible public spaces to convivially inhabit, these members did not perceive there to be any major barriers for them around factors of choice, convenience, price, time, or much else in prioritising this method of food procurement. A caveat to that is most participants expressed an initial psychological discomfort in joining this existing small community, perhaps feeling an awkwardness in enacting their values publicly for the first time (Boarder-Giles, 2021). Pushing past that first barrier was for most only a matter of a few days of sitting with their disquiet, and of learning the ropes, to become more comfortable in the space and their food procurement choices. Many participants expressed sadness that more people don't avail themselves of the opportunity to find community around food in this way, especially considering the current copious reports about supermarket rorts, systemic injustices in the food supply chains, and earth system collapse.

These findings resonate strongly with human ecology theorists who assert that to live well requires a shift from living within a productionist paradigm to a biosensitve paradigm (Dyball & Newell, 2023; Wilkes, 2022). This means that urban people without existent sustainable practices need to experience a personal shift in their understandings around what it really is to live well, in order to change the actions they take for their own longer and short-term self-interests. Several scholars assert that sharing food in convivial intercultural collective learning spaces can shift perceptions and behaviours (Border-Giles, 2021; Khorana, 2018: Levkoe, 2006). These co-op members confirm that the solidarity, conviviality, community and engagement found at this food network operating within biosensitive principles, are valued over and above perceived convenience, cost and variety in their food procurement choices.

While the small sample size and scope of this Australian inner-city solidarity-based co-op precludes an extension of its findings to other situations and contexts, we do now know more about this solidarity-based biosensitive food network. There should be plenty of room for rich future research within the thick economies of other values-led food cooperatives and networks - if they are lent enough support and opportunity to disperse. Contributions to the academic understanding of the lived experience of those who participate this way in the flourishing of biosensitivity could also help grow the solidarity-based food movement. Future qualitative research with dumpster divers, grassroots groups and organisations such as Food Not Bombs and Ozharvest, could assist in further understandings around the kinds of variables and relationships that solidarity-based food networks operating at different scales would need. Defining how to support such systems is especially germane considering the recently released Canberra Region Local Food Strategy calls for an increase of social enterprises, not-for-profits, and co-operatives to diversify and strengthen our local food system (2024).

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Appendix A

Food Co-op Interview Questions 2024

* Question 13:

This question was included to provoke interest in participants about underlying values as guiding principles, and of how these conceptions could figure in food procurement. This sequence of questions about basic human values was taken from Wilkes' previous research. A mapping of the condensed values scores, as per Wilkes (2022), was conceptualised in order to make comparison with Wilkes' work on how and which basic human values might motivate people to become involved in solidarity-based food networks. While this gender-based research would have made an interesting and perhaps rewarding direct comparison - although there are only twenty participants in this study as opposed to many more in Wilkes' work - it is beyond the scope of this research. As well, there is currently a call for academic boycott on work arising from universities seen to be complicit with violations of international law, which might include the Schwartz human values research (BDS, 2024). Responses from this question were hence not utilised in analysis or discussion.

Using Human Ecology to identify barriers to values-led purchasing behaviours: What do ANU Food Co-op members perceive as barriers to, and enablers of, values-led food procurement?

- ☐ **CONSENT FORM**
- ☐ **PRONOUNS**
- ☐ **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**
- ☐ **START AUDIO**

Thank you for agreeing to talk with me - the interview will take about an hour and your feedback will be anonymous. The data you provide will be treated confidentially. Could you start by telling me:

1. Why did you first join the co-op?

- *Can you tell me about your experience of joining?*

- *Are you reasons for continuing to be a member different to those that prompted you to join in the first place? If so, please outline how your reasons have changed since joining.*

- *Can you define what being a working member of the co-op means to you?*

2. What aspects of the co-op are most important to you?

- *What do you see as benefits of co-op membership?*

- *Why are those things important to you?*
    - *Can you explain why you have chosen to become a working member of the co-op rather than shop at a bulk food shop?*

3. What if anything has changed for you since joining?

- *Can you give me an example of something that has changed for you since joining?*

- *Have any of your food preferences changed since joining?*

4. Do you think your values have changed as a result of being a working member of the food co-op?

- *What do you think prompted those changes?*

- *Do you feel anything is more or less important now than it used to be for you, because of your experience at the co-op?*

5. Thinking back to when you first joined, were there any barriers you had to overcome to being a working member?

- *Can you tell me about what helped you overcome them?*

6. Can you reflect please on what you perceive as barriers for others in joining the co-op?

- *Can you tell me more about them?*

- *What do think might encourage more people to become involved in the food co-op?*

7. How much do you think people's values are at play in becoming a member?

- *what different values do you think are influencing peoples' decisions to become a working member or stop being a working member?*

8. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about your food co-op experience, or any reflections about the things we've been talking about today?

[Food values]

9. How important to you are the following things in regard to the food you eat?

	Not at all important (1)	Slightly important (2)	Moderately important (3)	Very important (4)	Extremely important (5)
Price (the price that is paid for the food)	○	○	○	○	○
Taste (extent to which consumption of the food is appealing to the senses)	○	○	○	○	○
Convenience (ease with which food is accessed, cooked, and/or consumed)	○	○	○	○	○
Fairness (the extent to which all parties involved in producing food benefit fairly)	○	○	○	○	○
Environmental impacts (effect of food production & distribution on the environment)	○	○	○	○	○
Health and Nutrition (the contribution that eating the food makes to your health)	○	○	○	○	○
Origin (where the products were grown)	○	○	○	○	○
Treatment of animals (e.g. welfare of animals involved in food production)	○	○	○	○	○
Tradition (preserving cultural food customs)	○	○	○	○	○
Familiarity (extent to which you recognise the	○	○	○	○	○

food or have eaten it before)					
How the food was produced (e.g. regenerative, organic, free range)	○	○	○	○	○
Novelty (whether the food is new, unusual, or interesting) and recommendations	○	○	○	○	○

10. To what extent to you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)
It is important to me that the food I buy is in line with my personal values.	○	○	○	○
I can easily access food that is in line with my personal values.	○	○	○	○
I have access to enough information about the food I eat to know whether or not it is in line with my personal values.	○	○	○	○
Financial factors limit my ability to access food that is in line with my personal values	○	○	○	○
Time constraints limit my ability to access food that is in line with my personal values	○	○	○	○

10a. ASK ONLY IF Somewhat disagree or Disagree or Strongly disagree with 'I can easily access food that is in line with my personal values':
Which of your food values are the **most difficult** for you to meet currently?

Please select no more than 3 values.

- [ ] Price (the price that is paid for the food)
- [ ] Taste (extent to which consumption of the food is appealing to the senses)
- [ ] Convenience (ease with which food is accessed, cooked, and/or consumed)
- [ ] Fairness (the extent to which all parties involved in producing food benefit fairly)
- [ ] Environmental impacts (effect of food production & distribution on the environment)
- [ ] Health and Nutrition (the contribution that eating the food makes to your health)
- [ ] Origin (where the products were grown)
- [ ] Treatment of animals (e.g. welfare of animals involved in food production)
- [ ] Tradition (preserving cultural food customs)
- [ ] Familiarity (extent to which you recognise the food or have eaten it before)
- [ ] How the food was produced (e.g. regenerative, organic, free range)
- [ ] Novelty (whether the food is new, unusual, or interesting) and recommendations

[food purchasing]

11. Where do you mainly get the majority of the fresh food you eat? (By 'fresh food', we mean fresh fruit and vegetables, meat, eggs, and other raw ingredients).

- ○ The Food Co-op
- ○ Supermarket (e.g. Woolworths, Coles, ALDI, IGA, Foodworks, etc.)
- ○ Grocery or specialist store (e.g. fruit & vegetable grocer, butcher)
- ○ Farmers' market
- ○ Community Supported Agriculture (eg Canberra Southern Harvest)
- ○ Meal kit service (e.g Hello Fresh, Marley Spoon)
- ○ Grow my own (backyard growing, community garden)
- ○ Other (please describe):

12. Other than the main way you selected in the previous question, please indicate any other ways you regularly use to get fresh food.
[Note: this question should allow the respondent to select as many that apply, with the exception that if they select "None (I get everything from the same place" they should not be allowed to select other options].

- ☐ The Food Co-op
- ☐ Supermarket (e.g. Woolworths, Coles, ALDI, IGA, Foodworks)
- ☐ Grocery or specialist store (fruit & vegetable grocer, butcher)
- ☐ Farmers' market
- ☐ Community Supported Agriculture
- ☐ Meal kit service (e.g Hello Fresh, Marley Spoon..)
- ☐ Grow my own (backyard growing, community garden…)
- ☐ Other (please describe): _____
- ☐ None (I get everything from the same place)

[Basic human values]

13. Below are brief descriptions of some people. Please read each description and think about how much each person is or is not like you. Using the 6-point scale from "Very much like me" to "Not like me at all", please indicate how similar each person is to you.

These questions aim to explore your overarching values - things that are desirable goals that guide and motivate you across various situations in your life. We are asking these questions to look for patterns to get a better understanding of the diversity of values held by people who participate in values-led food systems, such as the Food Co-op.

There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers, and none of the values are seen as better or worse than any other. Please don't spend too much time weighing up your answer, your initial gut reaction is appropriate.

	Very much like me (6)	Like me (5)	Somewhat like me (4)	A little like me (3)	Not like me (2)	Not like m all (1)
They believe they should always show respect to their parents and to older people. It is important to them to be obedient	○	○	○	○	○	○
Religious belief is important to them. They try hard to do what their religion requires.	○	○	○	○	○	○
It's very important to them to help the people around them. They want to care for the well-being of the people near them.	○	○	○	○	○	○
They think it is important that every person in the world be treated equally. They believe everyone should have equal opportunities in life.	○	○	○	○	○	○
They think it's important to be interested in things. They like to be curious and to try to understand all sorts of things.	○	○	○	○	○	○
They like to take risks. They are always looking for adventures.	○	○	○	○	○	○
They seek every chance they can to have fun. It is important to them to do things that give them pleasure.	○	○	○	○	○	○
Being very successful is important to them. They like to impress other people.	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is important to them to be in charge and tell others what to do. They want people to do what they tell them to.	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is important to them that things be organised and clean. They really do not like things to be a mess.	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is important to them to protect the natural environment from destruction or pollution	○	○	○	○	○	○

[Demographic questions]

Age Group:

less than 20, 20-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, 61-70, over 70

14. Please choose the option which best describes you.

- ☐ I am a current Co-op working member or have been within this year.
- ☐ I have been a Co-op working member in the past but am not currently.
- ☐ I plan to be a Co-op working member in the future but am not currently.

    - Prior to 2024, how many years have you participated as a working member at the co-op?

    - Do you plan to continue as a working member next year? (yes, no, maybe)

    - Do you have any suggestions for how the co-op could offer to support or supplement your experience?

15. Prior to becoming a member of the Food Co-op, had you previously participated in a not-for-profit food co-op, or Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

16. Have you participated in, or do you donate to, any environmental, food or social justice, or animal welfare initiatives?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

17. Have you spent time hiking, or pursuing other outdoor activities, or living outside of cities in more natural environments?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

18. Do you grow or raise food for human consumption?
(e.g. as a farmer, community gardener, backyard gardener, keep chickens for eggs, etc.)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
    - Do **you feel close** to the farmers who produce the food you eat?
        - ☐ Yes
        - ☐ No
    - Would you **ideally like to feel** close to the farmers who produce the food you eat?
        - ☐ Yes
        - ☐ No

19. Are you interested in locally produced foods?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
    - If interested in locally produced foods, why?
    -

Thankyou so much for sharing your time and your experience of the co-op.

Appendix B

Food Co-op Feedback Report 2024

Report Back to the Co-op: Summary of the June 2024 ANU Food Co-op Interviews

Using Human Ecology to identify barriers to values-led purchasing behaviours: What do ANU Food Co-op members perceive as barriers to, and enablers of, values-led food procurement?

I am very grateful to the twenty current working members of the Food Co-op who last month agreed to speak with me in researching an honours thesis - *Barriers and potential pathways to values-led food purchasing behaviour.* I also am a current working member of the co-op, and this year, a student at the ANU studying Human Ecology at the Fenner School of Environment and Society.

The project aim is to understand the ways that values-based food systems might influence change in individuals, and the potential that these systems could have to influence change across society and the food system.

My thought with the interviews was to identify any common themes that might emerge relating to motivations and values around co-op involvement. It is anticipated that the data will be analysed using a simple form of discourse analysis technique, and then the transcripts used to provide quotable passages that might reinforce these themes.

The addition of comparative analysis with previous work done on national food values and systems might help in the identification of barriers, and potential pathways, to greater values-led food purchasing behaviours; and new knowledge of whether wider environmental sustainability and social justice aspects are promoted by co-op involvement. Potentially and hopefully, the research may be beneficial to the co-op, and maybe could help identify opportunities for the scaling and proliferation of such systems; or help to identify the kinds of variables and relationships that systems operating at different scales would need. Understanding enablers, barriers, costs and rewards of participation in food systems which have sustainability outcomes could help greater participation in these or similar systems. Understanding how citizens shift to food systems that outwardly appear to necessitate changing short-term self-interest (e.g. convenience, choice, cost, control), to support longer-term self-interest and broader community/environmental interests, could help inform the transition for others to sustainable practices.

Following the interviews I have much to reflect upon. The following questions, and the research question itself, were based on an assumption that 'values' are an inherent part of peoples decision-making around food choices, and in becoming part of a co-operative. I was taking for granted that values-based decision-making would be of import for co-op members. But not all respondents followed along with the easy use of this assumption. One respondent in particular replied in the negative in regards to values being of any significance at all in a community, and that in fact, one's personal values ought not be the basis for co-operative action and communication.

This is really only a draft of the preliminary findings. I will forward on a link to the finished writings later in the year in case of interest.
It seems obvious, but from these interviews, it really does seem the case that the love, care, and friendship inherent at the co-op is recognisably what makes it function and flourish. And that an initial connection either to theories, ideas or communities with similar values - or to a friend already involved in the co-op - is what brings people here, and also what keeps them strong in other spaces.

Once again, thankyou all so very much for helping me and sharing your time and thoughts, and wonderful stories of your experiences at the co-op. And thanks for your care of the co-op, see you soon, Keri.

The interview questions:

Participants were interviewed in a semi-structured format. To begin with we read through the participant information sheet which explained the research interest in values-led food systems and the values that the people who engage with them bring, and what motivates them to participate at the co-op. Participants were then invited to talk about their past and experience of working at the co-op. There were some prompt questions to focus on key topics, and most participants of their own volition discussed the sort of information required.

Pronouns:

While this was asked only to correctly address interviewees, not to capture data, it is worth noting that of the twenty people who sat down with me to engage in a semi-structured interview, only four use 'he/him' pronouns. At first I was thinking that it would be better to select for a diverse representation of co-op working members, but then I decided to sit with the truth of the current situation at the co-op – there are simply many more members who do the bulk of the volunteering right now at the co-op who use she/her pronouns.

Participants were selected in a snowballing fashion from a set of volunteers who for the last year or more have been continually present, working and grounded physically at the co-op. There are a variety of necessary day-to-day volunteer positions within the co-op, and different spaces to occupy – the interview participants work in all of these spaces.

The interviews did not ask for participant's personal details other than age. But it is worth noting that the co-op has been critiqued as somewhat of a white space. This is reflected in the fact that those who participated in this process indicate currently a lack of cultural diversity amongst the co-op's core group of volunteer working members. This will be a source of reflection in my writings.

1. Why did you first join the co-op?

As a conversation-starter type question, this brought most people's minds directly into reflection upon the start of their journey at the co-op.
For many it was about buying good food - bulk food, ethical food, low-waste, locally produced, sustainably grown foods (10). For others it was more about really changing the food system overall (5). For some it was the roof-top gardening (2).

But quite a few interviewees remember feeling that joining the co-op would be a good way to make friends with an existing like-minded community (10). For many, a friend on campus introduced them (10). Some came through lunching at the café (5). Three had had parents who were members. Half of all respondents were new to Canberra when they first joined, and three cite that a positive benefit of being a working member was practicing their English language skills. One participant who has since introduced many friends who are also working members, wanted '*something extra to do after retiring'.*

- *Can you tell me about your experience of joining?*

None of the members who have been working at the co-op for over twenty years (5 participants) could really remember the details of their actual joining experience, other than that it seemed to be not as straightforward as it is now. The situation of the co-op back then was felt to be dark and dingy in comparison to the current space, and not very user-friendly. The newer members who have started at the co-op within the last two years (also 5 participants), felt the current joining process to be simple. Most participants (7) have been working at the co-op in one role or another for between 5 and 15 years, and 3 participants for around 4 years. Some respondents enlarged upon the further step in signing up for volunteering, which was felt to be less straightforward than joining itself.
Some respondents answered this question around the actual joining process itself, while others expounded more on their personal feelings when joining - for instance using words like *bewildering* to describe their initial experience of bulk food shopping, and expressing remembering feeling *overwhelmed* (4) or *intimidated,* but also that people were *kind, welcoming* and *friendly* (7) when describing their initial experiences of being a working member in the community.
One member who joined to volunteer in the café as a young person described feeling the vibe as *dynamic* and *chaotic,* and another young person also describing their first days in the café, spoke of having to first sit back for a time, and attune to the place in order to get a sense of how everything functioned before jumping in.

- *Are you reasons for continuing to be a member different to those that prompted you to join in the first place? If so, please outline how your reasons have changed since joining.*

All respondents felt that their initial reasons mostly remain, but now for many (16), the social aspect of being in community and their connections are definitively their focus:
'…now almost primarily social – its not cheap oats anymore…'
'my social fix…'
'the co-op as community space so important'
'a rare warm social space where you don't necessarily have to buy anything'
Those who didn't initially join so much for ethical shopping reasons now find they care more about that aspect in their own lives, and about food systems - plus sharing *'healthy meals and community lunches are a lovely opportunity'*.

One person who has been involved in many overseas co-ops remarked that this food co-op has the strongest sense of community that they have experienced. Three participants mentioned how good it is sharing the co-op with their children.
Most participants now feel that they are more knowledgeable about, helpful to, and really part of, '*something bigger than the sum of its parts'* - i.e. us!
People appreciate the volunteer ethos, the co-operative nature of working together and the not-for-profit ethos (11). Some spoke also of appreciating *'the challenges'* of being in community.
Some older participants now have more time than they did to become more involved than previously (5). Most respondents (17) report now feeling *'more invested in the longevity'* and *'survival'* of the co-op. Two felt obligation or responsibility for their continued participation as a repayment for all that they feel they've received from the co-op. Other interviewees also expressed their determination to see the success of co-operatives in general (7).

- *Can you define what being a working member of the co-op means to you?*

With this question some participants outlined the parameters of a definition of a working member at the co-op, while others elaborated on what being a working member means to them. Most interviewees determined that being an active member at the co-op, as *'a cog in the wheel'* - *'being part of something bigger than oneself'* - *'many hands make light work'*- is what makes their experience meaningful (14).
Again, being part of a community was the main takeaway here. A sense of ownership and the use of the space was valued by some (6). Some participants wanted specifically to volunteer to add structure to their life, to feel useful, be engaged, to enact *'the values of cooperation'*, and give back to the community:
'to be part of something more meaningful than my own life'
'the food is a nice side-benefit'
Four members indicated that seeing how the co-op functions '*from the inside',* being part of decision-making, and also making connections with the wider co-op movement is valuable to them.
The financial benefits were mentioned here only four times.
Some participants considered that the co-op has given them as individuals more confidence, purpose, meaning, responsibility, and a sense of usefulness and self-worth:
'so different to the rest of my life which is quite solitary'
'Like a revolution in my life…'

2. What aspects of the co-op are most important to you?

Similarly to the last part of question one above, participants here again elaborated on what the co-op means to them.

They mostly cited similar aspects of the co-op as being important, including:

Eating/sharing/making healthy ethical fresh food - making friends, community, gardening, fun and social life, and sharing a range of cultures. 4 members spoke of the community as '*a family'*.

A way of engaging with Food Sovereignty and changing the food system:
'an anti-capitalist way of engaging with the food system'
'a community that cares about a fair food system enough to volunteer their time'

Participatory democracy - learning new skills, a sense of ownership, having a say in decision-making, community-mindedness, supporting alternative economic systems:

'…experiment with to make decisions collectively'
'…many peoples minds working together'
'…its satisfying to overcome challenges…financial, cockroaches, and conflict'
'every person who contributes has potential impact upon others who benefit from the space'

Circular systems - addressing concerns around industrial recycling, recycling and composting, reducing personal waste, and different and unique ways of reusing containers.

The financial benefits of being a working member are also valued, here mentioned by most of the interviewees.

And the space itself, for conversation, rest and refuge is valued:
'the convening power of real spaces as opposed to online'
'a space where people can put ideas into action'
'semi-public spaces unique in Australia now – people in a space just existing, not spending'

- *What do you see as benefits of co-op membership?*

Most participants here outlined the literal financial benefits of being a working member, some the nutritive benefits, but none felt that these were their main priorities. Everyone elaborated on the personal meaningfulness that being a working member has had in their lives:
'as a whole package, the co-op fills a gap'

'…tangible, surface, seen benefits - the discounts; and the intangible – empowerment, healing alienation etc…'
'a special place in what can be an individualised, exploitative, extractive, numb world'

'people know who you are here – its like 'cheers', but without being in a bar'

'there are no robots serving, you can have a chat'

- *Why are those things important to you?*

'you know who you're working with, and you know who you're working for'
'feels better for having it – I would feel the loss if it stopped'

'fulfills a basic human need'
'industrial agriculture is part of the colonial project'
'one of the few places in Canberra that offers a community hub'
'I wouldn't know where to go if we didn't have a food co-op'
'…part of a movement - strength in numbers – more powerful as community…'

- *Can you explain why you have chosen to become a working member of the co-op rather than shop at a bulk food shop?*

This question had already been answered already by most participants. Everyone seemed bemused by it - that it was of course plainly obvious – working members feel a sense of ownership of the co-op:
'they're shops not co-ops!'
'you can't volunteer at a bulk food store!'

3. What if anything has changed for you since joining?

Some participants asked whether this question was supposed to be about just the co-op, food, or their own life, and struggled to narrow down some thing in particular to report - especially those who have been around the co-op for decades!
Many reported becoming more and more involved as time went on, gaining confidence, participating in decision-making, and becoming surer of how co-ops work – and lots of new skills learnt along the way, for example conflict resolution:
'…feeling of investment in the co-op meant that problems just need figuring out rather than stepping away'
'the co-op builds confidence'
'training for society and a proper job'
'opportunities to reflect on one's character and attitude..'
Some interviewees discussed their happiness and joy in seeing others putting in the hours, making the shop a success, sharing information, and how interesting it is to see how others conduct their lives. Some members commented that they feel they are more compassionate now, and more aware of '*progressive causes and activism in Canberra'.*

- *Can you give me an example of something that has changed for you since joining?*

'more radical in my way of thinking about food and food systems'
'experience of the co-op has made me more certain of what I want to do'
'working membership factored into decision to leave fulltime work – a pathway out of corporate life'
'my job'
'so much…recipes, friends, community, confidence'
'I'm riding everywhere now – and taking pride in fitting all my groceries on the bike'
'started composting - more conscious of packaging and waste'

'so many lasting friendships from the co-op – advertised for housemates at the co-op, which made an amazing sharehouse'

- *Have any of your food preferences changed since joining?*

Some participants did enjoy expounding on the different lentils or other products that they now purchase here, but others lent less importance to this aspect of the co-op, reiterating that the community at the co-op is their main interest.
No, no change = 4
Always vegetarian/vegan = 4 (and one member reports changing to being vegetarian because of the co-op lunches).
Now cooking more vegetarian/vegan = 8
Now more interested in buying organic = 5
Participants commented that their awareness and preference for ethical food has increased as a result of working at the co-op:
Two members are now more invested in local foods; two limiting their dairy after learning more about the costs of dairy; 8 members commented they now buy much less processed, prepackaged foods and eat more healthily; another two that they now eat more seasonally; and 11 that they are much more open to trying new foods. One member commented that they now have an appreciation of spices and seasonings, and an understanding of cookery as a result of helping the chefs in the kitchen.

4. Do you think your values have changed as a result of being a working member of the food co-op?

Rather than changing outrightly because of the co-op, most participants felt that their values had rather been re-enforced, supported and made stronger by their involvement at the co-op:
'*somethings deepened'*
'deepened – same values but learnt how to practice them here'
'…enabled to live in tune with my values'
'glad I haven't had to compromise'
'…never exposed to seeing the value of a co-operative functioning before'
'the uniqueness and potential of cooperatives as an entity…to influence preferences for ways of being in the world'
And that awareness, through interactions with others at the co-op, rather than their values, had changed *'…like from Food not Bombs and Students against War and the Greens using the space…'*
Participants felt the co-op has made them more aware than ever of the importance of the politics of food sovereignty and ethical food:
'…more conscious of the profit-making aspects of the food supply chain'
'…already on a pathway of food sovereignty and local food systems…strengthened, seeing it play out in action…pragmatism – adding nuance to choosing tradeoffs – how to balance all values at once? '
'what I love about the co-op is the alignment of food and values…'

Two older participants remembered to add as an afterthought that they feel now much more aware and connected to LGBTQI community issues - glad that the co-op is *'a safe space for diversity'* and, *'this place is a hub for trans rights'*.

- *What do you think prompted those changes?*

Again, most participants felt that their values had been supported and made stronger by greater involvement and time spent at the co-op in conversation. Being part of a diverse and normalized politically aware, active community raises everyone's awareness:
'a distinct feature of the co-op is sitting with strangers over lunch having new conversations'

'the existence of the co-op is good for one's imagination – its different from the capitalist dominant paradigms…the co-op is a living breathing example of a long-lasting alternative'

'exposure to the benefits of community grows social values'

'a better way of living'

'seeing the world not in terms of getting the cheapest…that the extra money isn't needed'

'just exposure to all the different people – doing the dishes, making the lunches, serving the lunch etc etc'

'its the intention of the space and the people in it – all keen to be caring, cooperative and doing it ourselves…'

- *Do you feel anything is more or less important now than it used to be for you, because of your experience at the co-op?*

Some participants mused for some time over the wording of this question – many replied in regards to the co-op itself as a space (10), or politics:
'the co-op is an oasis – otherwise Canberra is quite bland'
'these organisations are ever more important – founding something like this now would be more difficult - not easily duplicated'
'more open to advocating…more outspoken with family and friends'
'I'm more true to myself'
'more space for the voices excluded, silenced or not taken as seriously'
'I was educated here – organics, the environment, human rights, the lot'
'time should not be wasted on inconsequential stuff'
'values, kindness…there is lots of that here…elsewhere hard to find'
Some reiterated their stronger leanings towards ethical food (8):
'helped to reflect and change food habits to align with co-op'
'looking after local communities – reinvesting into our own community and local economy'

5. Thinking back to when you first joined, were there any barriers you had to overcome to being a working member?

Most participants answered that they did not have too many barriers to overcome(12). 6 reported they were timepoor initially and had to rearrange life a bit.
Some reported shyness, and of feeling overwhelmed by the existing community and space (9). One found the big urban front and concrete and buses off-putting.
Two members reported that persistence was needed as nobody even responded to their enquiries…

- *Can you tell me about what helped you overcome them?*

The kindness *'and tenderness'* of others (7).
'feeling appreciated, and the knowledge of a job well done'
Other methods reported were: sitting back and letting themselves acclimatise to the context of the community; managerial and other member's support; asking advice, checklists and training sessions.

6. Can you reflect please on what you perceive as barriers for others in joining the co-op?

All of the reasons listed below were provided by participants as suggestions to why people might find getting to the co-op difficult:

- Not enough time – busy family life:

'a certain amount of dollars needed to survive means not enough time to participate – a certain mentality is needed to make dollars enough to survive – its tricky figuring out what you really do and don't need…if you can, you can have more community and more time'

- Transport and accessibility/parking
- Perception of there not being enough food options
- Feeling bulkfood shopping is too complex – not knowing how to shop - too expensive, unsanitary
- Not feeling connected to food, farmers, land

- Shyness - perception of hippy/alternative/cliquey/political demographic:

'loud lunchtimes with young people everywhere…'

'If you didn't know anyone already here it can be socially overwhelming – its a social space, so if you can, hang out and ask questions…'

'the co-op is seen as a white space – a racist space'

- *Can you tell me more about them?*

Enlarging upon the above:
'New situations are challenging for humans – its an involved space where one is encouraged to be involved…familiarisation is needed…haste is less gettable, anonymity too'
'paying for membership for some is a financial barrier – why pay when you don't have to elsewhere…as opposed to the altruism of supporting the co-op'
'meat-eaters worried about vegans – judgmental co-op-ers?'

'…no opportunities for people to discover the co-op…a lifestyle of take-aways….'
'the new more formalised volunteer agreements could put people off…'
'Women of Colour perceive the co-op as conservative but billed as progressive, with a structural inequality where their voices are not heard'

- *What do think might encourage more people to become involved in the food co-op?*

People took this question seriously and they already spend time and care in thinking about this, because they feel invested and interested in the co-op's success.

Three participants felt that the logic of 'ever-more growth' could not be applied to the co-op, and that other decentralised co-ops are needed. One member had come to the conclusion that *'…if someone wants the co-op they will find the co-op'*. A different participant questions *'but who adjusts to whose values? The ethos and image of the co-op is not liked by all – its political activist stuff, its not like a bulkfood place – others might prefer a different model of a community hub'*.
Another cautioned that '*its hard work training people up and keeping them around, so its really important to find the right people for the roles'*. And another suggests *'grounding an expectation from the outset that people don't just join as non-working members but that they will come in and volunteer'*.
Many suggested more diverse outreach and activities to hit different demographics. Others suggested better advertising of the lunches and co-op hangout space. Others emphasised that within wider society there just needs wider appreciation of the benefits of co-operatives and volunteering. These are some other suggestions:
'more couches, more comfy, better library'
'better return on investment of time'
'more stories up of the suppliers – to give a personal attachment to the food'
'bring a friend day – to encourage working members on shifts to introduce others to the co-op'
'Sunday meals of seasonal produce; competitions to cook the best dish run by different chefs and the seedsavers; workshops preserving street fruit tree produce; cooking activities for students; movie nights about co-ops'

7. How much do you think people's values are at play in becoming a member?
Almost everyone answered that they thought values probably were a good deal at play in people joining the co-op, particularly as a volunteer, '*otherwise people would be at a bulkfood shop instead*'.
'the vibe is definitely values – people see themselves as having values'
'working members mostly ideologically committed and aligned with co-op values'

But others reckon that the convenience of proximity, the cheap lunches and financial discounts are also at play.
One participant said: *'we're all different, I don't know…'*
And another questions the effectiveness of merely having the same values to get the same thing done:
'we shouldn't use values to differentiate people – how do we understand and co-exist with people who share different values?...different histories and values, but everyone can be here drinking tea – how do we use what we have to bring people together?'
This member wanted to say that they like the feeling at the co-op - that the space is open for all to navigate without pressure, sharing laughter and food.

- *what different values do you think are influencing peoples' decisions to become a working member or stop being a working member?*

Interviewees thought that values around community; social spaces; volunteering; sustainability; the environment; low-waste; the ethics of food production; organic production; local production; the not-for-profit nature of the co-op; alternative economies and *'not supporting the duopoly'* might all play a part in influencing membership:

'a mixture of optimism and pessimism with ecological responsibility'

'valuing yourself and feeling like you're participating'

'without the working, the concept of co-op collapses – the volunteering is mostly by women – how to get men?'

Participants wondered if the tradeoffs involved in adjudicating time and priorities….plus the lack of parking, makes continued working membership difficult for some. One participant thought that '*burn-out, frustration with co-op workings, thwarted vision and inter-personal conflict*' plays a part too.

8. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about your food co-op experience, or any reflections about the things we've been talking about today?

This question for some of the participants merely signalled the end of this part of the interview and gave rise to no new information (8). 8 others mainly made affirmative grateful thanks for the co-op in their lives, and reinforced their hope for its thriving:
'my comfort zone – my place now'

'I get more out of the co-op than the co-op gets out of me'

'met some of the most important people in my life here'

'I was 19yrs old initially and it was rare then to hang out with different ages…here feeling equals with…connections made with other ages, cultures…space to share and understand better, and a sense gained of how big the world is…'

Some other thoughts:
'displeased there are so few co-ops about, but its challenging and difficult to run volunteer-led co-ops'

'there is a perception of a mismatch between what the co-op says its about and its project, and why it actually exists…(this person) experienced cognitive dissonance while in the space, so they exited'

'cliquey? ..is it too much for others – how do people break into a community?'

'there is widespread media coverage nowadays about the media duopoly and the corporatisation of food systems…but the disillusionment hasn't changed the food co-op's membership much…a critical mass is needed – people are more reflective about foods, but other co-ops are closing down…why?'

[Food values]

The following questions are quantitative in nature. The results were mostly quite aligned. Question 9 uses a scale of one to five, where (1) is not at all important, and (5) very important. The results here seem to weigh more heavily towards *all* aspects of foods being at least mediumly to very important. One interviewee qualified their response to price as being in practice, both (1) and (5), because they are able to mitigate its importance with their agency of procurement. All respondents were unsurprisingly concerned about the effect of food production upon the health of people, animals, and the environment.

9. How important to you are the following things in regard to the food you eat?

	Not at all important (1)	Slightly important (2)	Moderately important (3)	Very important (4)	Extremely important (5)
Price (the price that is paid for the food)	○ 2	○ 4	○ 8	○ 5	○ 2
Taste (extent to which consumption of the food is appealing to the senses)	○ 0	○ 0	○ 3	○ 5	○ 12
Convenience (ease with which food is accessed, cooked, and/or consumed)	○ 2	○ 8	○ 8	○ 2	○ 0
Fairness (the extent to which all parties involved in producing food benefit fairly)	○ 0	○ 0	○ 5	○ 5	○ 10
Environmental impacts (effect of food production & distribution on the environment)	○ 0	○ 0	○ 2	○ 4	○ 14
Health and Nutrition (the contribution that eating the food makes to your health)	○ 0	○ 1	○ 1	○ 6	○ 12
Origin (where the products were grown)	○ 0	○ 0	○ 7	○ 11	○ 2
Treatment of animals (e.g. welfare of animals involved in food production)	○ 0	○ 2	○ 1	○ 4	○ 13
Tradition (preserving cultural food customs)	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5	○ 6	○ 2
Familiarity (extent to which you recognise the food or have eaten it before)	○ 2	○ 9	○ 7	○ 2	○ 0
How the food was produced (e.g. regenerative, organic, free range)	○ 0	○ 1	○ 4	○ 5	○ 10

Novelty (whether the food is new, unusual, or interesting) and recommendations	○ 4	○ 5	○ 8	○ 2	○ 1

10. To what extent to you agree or disagree with the following statements?

This question's responses range from (1) to (6). One participant particularly mentioned that their time is too limited to grow the amount of food that they want to grow. The biggest disparity of answers here is in regards to financial limitations.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)
It is important to me that the food I buy is in line with my personal values.	○ 0	○ 0	○ 1	○ 2	○ 8	○ 9
I can easily access food that is in line with my personal values.	○ 0	○ 0	○ 2	○ 3	○ 12	○ 3
I have access to enough information about the food I eat to know whether or not it is in line with my personal values.	○ 1	○ 1	○ 1	○ 1	○ 12	○ 4
Financial factors limit my ability to access food that is in line with my personal values	○ 5	○ 3	○ 1	○ 4	○ 6	○ 1
Time constraints limit my ability to access food that is in line with my personal values	○ 2	○ 10	○ 1	○ 1	○ 6	○ 0

10a. (ASK ONLY IF Somewhat disagree or Disagree or Strongly disagree with 'I can easily access food that is in line with my personal values'): Which of your food values are the most difficult for you to meet currently?

Please select no more than 3 values.
This question was not needed to be asked of anyone.

- [ ] Price (the price that is paid for the food)
- [ ] Taste (extent to which consumption of the food is appealing to the senses)
- [ ] Convenience (ease with which food is accessed, cooked, and/or consumed)
- [ ] Fairness (the extent to which all parties involved in producing food benefit fairly)
- [ ] Environmental impacts (effect of food production & distribution on the environment)
- [ ] Health and Nutrition (the contribution that eating the food makes to your health)
- [ ] Origin (where the products were grown)
- [ ] Treatment of animals (e.g. welfare of animals involved in food production)
- [ ] Tradition (preserving cultural food customs)
- [ ] Familiarity (extent to which you recognise the food or have eaten it before)
- [ ] How the food was produced (e.g. regenerative, organic, free range)
- [ ] Novelty (whether the food is new, unusual, or interesting) and recommendations

[food purchasing]

11. Where do you mainly get the majority of the fresh food you eat? (By 'fresh food', we mean fresh fruit and vegetables, meat, eggs, and other raw ingredients).

It seemed with regret that some had to answer the supermarket here. The Food Co-op was the top answer. One respondent had to choose both growing and 'other' (dumpster diving), to indicate the need for flexibility around growing their own.

- ○ 7 The Food Co-op
- ○ 4 Supermarket (e.g. Woolworths, Coles, ALDI, IGA, Foodworks, etc.)
- ○ 1 Grocery or specialist store (e.g. fruit & vegetable grocer, butcher)
- ○ 4 Farmers' market
- ○ 3 Community Supported Agriculture (eg Canberra Southern Harvest)
- ○ Meal kit service (e.g Hello Fresh, Marley Spoon)
- ○ 1 Grow my own (backyard growing, community garden)
- ○ 1 Other (please describe): dumpstering etc

12. Other than the main way you selected in the previous question, please indicate any other ways you regularly use to get fresh food.

[Note: this question should allow the respondent to select as many that apply, with the exception that if they select "None (I get everything from the same place" they should not be allowed to select other options].

It seemed that people didn't really want to tick the supermarket box again, but almost all participants reported getting a small amount of something there. Where the co-op wasn't a

respondent's main place of fresh food procurement (above), it was their first answer here. Most of the interviewees have a wide range of food procurement sources.

- 13 The Food Co-op
- 12 Supermarket (e.g. Woolworths, Coles, ALDI, IGA, Foodworks)
- 8 Grocery or specialist store (fruit & vegetable grocer, butcher) Mostly for meat needs.
- 10 Farmers' market
- 0 Community Supported Agriculture Nobody counted their Southern Harvest box as only a secondary source of fresh food.
- 0 Meal kit service (e.g Hello Fresh, Marley Spoon..) None of the respondents uses these.
- 15 Grow my own (backyard growing, community garden…) Almost everyone grows at least herbs etc.
- 7 Other (please describe): Most of these respondents gift, swap and exchange produce with friends and neighbours. Two respondents also dumpster dive.
- 1 (I get everything from the same place) One respondent gets everything at the co-op.

[Basic human values]

13. Below are brief descriptions of some people. Please read each description and think about how much each person is or is not like you. Using the 6-point scale from "Very much like me" to "Not like me at all", please indicate how similar each person is to you.

These questions aim to explore your overarching values - things that are desirable goals that guide and motivate you across various situations in your life. We are asking these questions to look for patterns to get a better understanding of the diversity of values held by people who participate in values-led food systems, such as the Food Co-op. There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers, and none of the values are seen as better or worse than any other. Please don't spend too much time weighing up your answer, your initial gut reaction is appropriate.

It is yet to be determined whether these values questions will be purposeful, indicative, or used at all if/when compared with previous data captured in the National Food Values survey.

The working members interviewed mostly did not count themselves as religious, but of the two who replied very, one participant qualified this as spirituality. Almost everyone wants to help those

around them, and thinks that all ought to be treated equally; and overwhelmingly the interviewees want to help protect the natural environment.

	Very much like me (6)	Like me (5)	Somewhat like me (4)	A little like me (3)	Not like me (2)	Not like me at all (1)
They believe they should always show respect to their parents and to older people. It is important to them to be obedient	6	6	4	3	1	0
Religious belief is important to them. They try hard to do what their religion requires.	2	1	0	0	2	15
It's very important to them to help the people around them. They want to care for the well-being of the people near them.	12	7	1	0	0	0
They think it is important that every person in the world be treated equally. They believe everyone should have equal opportunities in life.	15	3	2	1	0	0
They think it's important to be interested in things. They like to be curious and to try to understand all sorts of things.	12	6	1	1	0	0
They like to take risks. They are always looking for adventures.	3	2	3	6	5	0
They seek every chance they can to have fun. It is important to them to do things that give them pleasure.	4	4	6	3	2	1

Being very successful is important to them. They like to impress other people.	0	1	5	3	7	4
It is important to them to be in charge and tell others what to do. They want people to do what they tell them to.	0	0	1	3	1 1	5
It is important to them that things be organised and clean. They really do not like things to be a mess.	4	6	4	3	2	1
It is important to them to protect the natural environment from destruction or pollution	14	6	0	0	0	0

[Demographic questions]

Age Group:

0 less than 20,

4 20-30,

5 31-40,

2 41-50,

6 51-60,

2 61-70,

1 over 70

This was the only demographic question of a personal nature - to what end remains unsure as yet!

14. Please choose the option which best describes you.

Everyone responded that they are current Co-op working members (which of course was the criteria for involvement!). This is where people guesstimated the length of their volunteering years.

- Prior to 2024, how many years have you participated as a working member at the co-op?

5 participants = over 20 years.
7 participants = between 5 and 15 years.
3 participants = around 4 years.
5 participants = less than 2 years.

- Do you plan to continue as a working member next year? (yes, no, maybe)

Everyone plans to continue on indefinitely, except one participant who is moving overseas.

- Do you have any suggestions for how the co-op could offer to support or supplement your experience?

Six people had no suggestions here.
Nine participants felt that better organisation in general, and better processes would be helpful, and particularly in regards to communication between management and working volunteers. Two participants felt that the handover between successive managers needed to be better managed, to ensure past historical lessons were learned. Several participants felt that the key thing for happy working members is getting more invested working members on board, rather than simply just more members who don't volunteer.

Some other suggestions:
Different teams to have team gatherings ie: in the garden for produce feasts etc.
Better and more regular inductions.
Better communication to members re. board meetings, and between different teams within the co-op.
And a better voice in decision-making ie: through democratic referendum-type voting on important things, eg: store credit rates.
A new co-op on the Southside!
'Better handling of inter-personal and dissatisfaction issues – before spiraling to bigger issue'.
'Better-paid or better-fitted staff that stick around and don't burn out – they do the important background work of keeping volunteers happy'

15. Prior to becoming a member of the Food Co-op, had you previously participated in a not-for-profit food co-op, or Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)?

Almost everyone responded no to this one, except for 4 respondents who had participated in overseas CSAs, and one member who had previously been a member of a food co-op interstate. This might indicate that the co-op is providing a valuable opportunity in this space for people to practically answer their values.

16. Have you participated in, or do you donate to, any environmental, food or social justice, or animal welfare initiatives?

Only three people responded no to this one.

17. Have you spent time hiking, or pursuing other outdoor activities, or living outside of cities in more natural environments?

Everyone responded yes to this one - maybe indicative that co-op working members have been somehow inspired by connection with 'nature' to help find critical solutions to the planetary food system crisis; and also perhaps that working at the co-op is a feedback loop that leads to further feelings of the importance of connection with nature.

18. Do you grow or raise food for human consumption?
(e.g. as a farmer, community gardener, backyard gardener, keep chickens for eggs, etc.)

All participants grow at least some herbs, and some much more, for human consumption. Many also keep chickens, and some have community garden plots.

- Do **you feel close** to the farmers who produce the food you eat?

12 participants answered yes. The 8 no respondents seemed to feel that while they do have more of a connection with local producers by being a co-op working member, they don't feel authentically close to the farmers producing their foods.

- Would you **ideally like to feel** close to the farmers who produce the food you eat?

Everybody answered yes.

19. Are you interested in locally produced foods? Everybody answered yes!

- If interested in locally produced foods, why?

And everyone had similar but wonderfully different sorts of reasons for being interested in local foods:

Food miles, transportation, and emissions:

'*.. faintly ridiculous to be eating food grown across the other side of the world*'

Better quality, seasonally appropriate produce:

'just the idea of it – it tastes better'

Forming community, relationships and connections with local landscapes, farmers and small-scale producers:
'food is more special when you know the person who grew it'
'relying on each other in the old-fashioned way'
'knowing when things are ripe, walking with knowledge of the local environment'
'connection to country'

Resilient food systems and food security:
'understanding how we can survive locally'
'*…armageddon*'

Appendix C

Participant Summaries

Table 5 Working member reasons for participation, as per Wilkes (2022)

Participant	Initial main motivation	Continuing main motivation
002401	Values-led	Relational
002402	Relational	Relational
002403	Instrumental	Relational
002404	Instrumental	Relational
002405	Systemic	Systemic
002406	Instrumental	Values-led
002407	Instrumental	Relational
002408	Instrumental	Relational
002409	Instrumental	Relational
002410	Relational	Relational
002411	Instrumental	Relational
002412	Instrumental	Relational
002413	Values-led	Relational
002414	Instrumental	Relational
002415	Instrumental	Relational
002416	Instrumental	Relational
002417	Instrumental	Systemic
002418	Instrumental	Relational
002419	Values-led	Systemic
002420	Systemic	Systemic

Participant 002401:
This young co-op working member has been volunteering at the co-op for several years, participating in many different ways. They seemed to enjoy the interview as a chance to articulate their wide-ranging considerations about the co-op's healthy functioning. Their interview took about forty minutes in the co-op café space.
Question One: They think of their reasons for joining the co-op as primarily values based, but also, and therefore, instrumental. Their reasons for continuing with the co-op have changed over time to become about mutual care - therefore relational; and also systemic, as 'industrial agriculture is part of the colonial project,' and their lack of faith in 'wider policy change means that individual change is needed but together in a group is better'.

Question Two: The most important aspects of the co-op to them are 'the bigger picture stuff'; that the co-op is 'the hub of my world', and a 'tangible representation of what I believe in'.
Question Three: As far as food preferences, they were already either mostly vegan or at least vegetarian, and now report eating less pre-prepared meals, and eating quite a lot at the co-op.
Question Four: In regards to how they feel their values may have changed as a result of being a working member and 'owning space', they believe themselves to be 'more progressive politically' as a result of community ('a way to be active without protest'); that they are more empathetic in their attitude to others; and of feeling empowered to participate.
Questions Five and Six: They did not feel particularly as though there had been any really strong barriers to their joining the co-op, but that the complexity of the physical space was overwhelming to begin with. The enablers to their overcoming that was the volunteering in itself, and making friends. They suggest that barriers for others becoming involved may include whether the co-op is an accessible space for people of colour, and ageism.
Question Seven: They believe that values play a big part in people becoming members of the co-op - for instance, those of community, and 'a mixture of optimistic and pessimistic ecological vision' - and that more people might become involved were a 'clearer pitch aimed at those already interested given, about not just financial benefits but ethical and social and community benefits', because 'the financial benefits alone are not significant enough to make volunteering stick if pre-existing values are not a factor'.
Question Eight: They think that there is risk of working members burning out because of 'frustration with co-op workings, thwarted vision, and interpersonal conflicts'. They worry that the co-op might seem cliquey and difficult to 'break into'. They report a friend telling them there is 'a mismatch between what the co-op says its about…its project, and why it actually exists' – that that person experienced cognitive dissonance in the space and exited.
For participant 002401, the following eleven closed-ended questions elicited straightforward answers and seemed pretty straightforward.
Question Fourteen: They have been a working member for two and a half years and their suggestions for the co-op involve better organisational structure and communication between different working groups of the co-op.
Question Nineteen: They named carbon miles and a connection to the Country they live on as their reasons for being interested in locally produced food, also reflecting that relying on local foods means that the weather and calamities that affect us are more known and therefore mitigated.

Participant 002402:

This co-op working member has been around the co-op for about a decade. They seemed to enjoy the interview, and the recording continued for over an hour.

Question One: This working member was made aware of the co-op by their parents, who were members as ANU students in the very early days. They think of their reasons for joining the co-op as primarily about community (relational); but also to procure fresh, organic foods, hot lunches and attend acoustic soup (a co-op monthly dinner with music), so also instrumental; and also because the co-op prioritises local, minimal impact foods, so their reasons are also values-based. Their reasons for continuing with the co-op underline relational community values.

Question Two: The most meaningful aspect of co-op membership for this member is 'being an active participant in the co-op community', helping in a 'volunteer capacity in the running of the co-op and fixing things'. The benefits are companionship and a social network, as well as the range and quality of good local unprocessed foods that 'care for the body' and are better for the planet. The co-op is seen as a rare Canberra space that offers an extra workspace and 'comfy refuge for chats with lovely people'.

Question Three: This participant is a life-long vegetarian. They now eat hot meals frequently at the co-op, and report that their feeling of investment in the co-op has increased simultaneously along with their volunteering, socialising and food procurement levels. They feel their co-op experience allows them 'opportunities to reflect on one's character and attitude'.

Question Four: This participant stated that their values had changed, but their answers seem to indicate rather a widening of existing knowledge. They attribute to the co-op their better understanding of issues and 'community activism', through meeting a broad range of people and community groups there. They stated that through personal involvement they now feel they have more understanding of how community organisations function and that they 'appreciates the co-op's values more'. Although previously aware of issues with the food system, they now more realise 'the food waste in the world', and 'was surprised by how little the co-op wastes' - instead, cooking and composting foods in a closed loop, circular economy. They feel that 'community spaces are so important in society', and that a 'theoretical, naïve, ideal co-op is less important' - that it is 'imperative that larger parts of the community operates in the manner of the co-op', even though the 'practical experience is complex and challenging'.

Questions Five and Six: This participant does not feel as though there were any barriers to joining the co-op. But they think that barriers for others are 'potentially lots', as 'new situations are challenging for humans' and the co-op is 'very different to a traditional shop'. They think of the co-op as 'an involved space where one is encouraged to be involved'. But 'familiarisation is needed – haste is less gettable, anonymity too'. They state that the co-op is not appealing at all if one were not aligned with the co-op values of sustainable food, and that while the co-op is more accessible these days in regards to cleanliness - in years past, not so much. They also wonder if for some, the idea of membership fees is a barrier, as the concept of 'altruistic support for the co-op' translates as 'why pay? when you don't have to

elsewhere'. And for others without the means, the membership fee would simply be a financial barrier. In regards to enablers, they state that the 'specific ethos and image of the co-op is not liked by all – the political activist stuff', but asks 'who adjusts to whose values'? They think that others might prefer a different model of community hub, and the 'educational background and values of the individuals' who make up the co-op, make the co-op.
Question Seven: This participant believes that values bear some weight in people becoming (non-working) members of the co-op, but are not altogether at play: 'If people had very oppositional values they wouldn't join', but convenience might prompt membership for people with 'neutral values', for instance, 'students at O week getting cheap lunches'. But they think that 'working members are ideologically committed and aligned with co-op values'. They believe that being caring about 'food origins, and being environmentally-minded, and community-minded' all influence people's decisions to become working members, as well as the desire for company – there are 'no robots serving, and you can have a chat'.
Question Eight: This participant wanted to add that while 'it is challenging and difficult to run a volunteer-led co-op', and that their involvement at the co-op has contained 'trials and tribulations', overall their experience has been greatly enriching and positive. They are 'so glad it has survived and hopes it thrives', and is 'displeased there are so few co-ops about'.
For statistically-minded participant 002402, the eleven closed-ended questions seemed of much interest, and took some consideration. They buy everything from the co-op.
Question Fourteen: They have been a more or less working member for ten years. Their suggestion for the co-op is around better organisation and 'professionalism for the co-op's future survival', for while 'the ethos is good', structures must be in place for effective and fluid transmission of knowledge.
Question Nineteen: Their interest in locally produced foods is around reduced transport emissions, seasonality of foods, connection with growers, and 'greater resilience in the community'.

Participant 002403:
This co-op working member has volunteered at the co-op for two years, prior to recently moving overseas. The interview was one of the more hurried and took only half an hour in the co-op office.
Question One: This participant has been a member of different co-ops since they were a child (now middle-aged). Their reasons for joining co-ops seem systemic and instrumental. They want to be a member of 'a community that holds the same values' as they do – reducing food waste, buying foods without pesticides, in bulk, their 'cumulative actions contributing to the planet'.

Question Two: The most important aspect of this co-op to them is reasonably priced bulk 'fossil-fuel-free food', and, as newcomers to Canberra, the community - although they would 'still volunteer if the community wasn't so strong'.
Question Three: None of this participant's food preferences have changed as a result of begin a co-op working member. Being part of what was to begin with a less attractive 'urban food co-op' for the first time, has made being urban more normal. They found Canberra 'quite bland, sterile', and the co-op 'an oasis'.
Question Four: They do not believe their values to have changed as a result of membership, but stated that their previous experience of overseas food co-ops was more 'like a shop, no café, music, markets', and that they liked 'the inclusivity of this community hub'.
Questions Five and Six: Other than feeling time-poor, they did not feel as though there were any real barriers to joining the co-op. They found though, that shopping and volunteering ended up being much easier than expected. The 'bland urban front – cement, buses, glass walls' was off-putting to begin with, but they overcame that by just walking in and getting used to things. They reflected that barriers for others could include that some may not appreciate initial join up fees. This participant thinks that the 'openness of the space to all regardless of purchase', and the lunches and social aspects of the co-op are very beneficial, and could be more promoted at the ANU by existing ANU members inviting their friends.
Question Seven: This participant believes that people becoming co-op members 'hinges upon' their values. And that levels of participation probably rise and fall with social connections made and lost, as well as how overwhelming other aspects of daily life might be.
Question Eight: Their only other reflection was that they were 'grateful - impact on the world is felt'.
Participant 002403 whipped through the following eleven closed-ended questions. They mainly only buy meat outside of the co-op.
Question Fourteen: They were a working member for two years before moving overseas, and had no suggestions for the co-op: 'no, its great – kindness is key'.
Question Nineteen: Their reasons for their interest in locally produced foods were interest in supporting the local community and 'other-than-corporations;, in reducing their 'carbon footprint'; and to procure organic, sprayfree foods.

Participant 002404:
This co-op working member and their small family have been on and off members of the co-op for decades. This interview took around forty minutes in the co-op café space.
Question One: Their initial reasons for joining the co-op as young students, which 'seemed optional back then', were primarily around accessing wholesome food on campus with

friends (instrumental), but when rejoining, values-based and relational. Their reasons for continuing with the co-op are still around healthy foods, the 'lovely opportunity' of lunches, and of waste minimization (instrumental), as well as 'contributing without too much pressure to a community' (relational).

Question Two: They see the greatest benefit of their involvement in the co-op as having access to a 'rare social space without necessarily buying stuff', that has 'warmth and is also intangible, magical'. They see semi-public spaces in Australia as unique these days, and that it is important to them to contribute to that which 'potentially impacts all others who use and benefit from the space'. Being part of something where 'people with different drivers' contribute without being paid creates a place which 'feels really different', and which seems to have an emphasis on 'deepening connections'.

Question Three: Even though they live further away these days, they feel that membership and the people they know at the co-op brings them a 'sense of identity outweighing the inconvenience' of continued working membership. They stated that although their financial situation is now more stable, the 'maximum discount [from volunteering] makes a big difference' to them, but they seemed to want to downplay their volunteering at the co-op as 'not a lot' and making 'minimal contribution really', and that their regular shopping for 'staples to provide for family' probably made more of a contribution.

To the question of whether their food preferences have changed (mostly predisposed to vegetarianism), they responded that their 'preferences for ways of being in the world' have changed. They stated that the co-op's 'emphasis on vegetarianism' and range of 'organic, ethically sourced, local vegetarian foods' has greatly influenced and informed their nutritional knowledge.

Question Four: In answer to whether their values may have changed as a result of being a working member, this participant answered that their 'understanding of the uniqueness and potential of co-operatives as entities' has changed. And that 'the existence of the co-op is good for one's imagination', adding, 'its different from capitalist dominant paradigms', and is a 'living breathing example of a long-lasting alternative'.

Questions Five and Six: Thinking back to their early years of first joining the co-op, this participant felt that the barriers to their involvement were around money and time, as well as being unconfident of how to contribute. They report feeling that the place didn't seem so friendly, or user-friendly, with an unattractive 'slightly neglected and bereft quality'. They suggest that barriers for others could include accessibility re. the co-op's location, parking, bringing kids, and for people with disabilities. They also wondered about 'cultural barriers' and if people might view the co-op as having a 'white, uni-student demographic' and feel excluded. They also suggest that bulk shopping is perceived to take more time, as more expensive, of limited range, and that the cooking of wholefoods takes longer.

Question Seven: They believe that values play 'a big part, a huge part' in people becoming members of the co-op. They named those values as community, volunteerism, and environmental awareness. They think the reasons people might struggle with or stop being a working member would be other 'time-of-life priorities'.

Question Eight: This participant's last thoughts were that they' love the co-op and it is a very important part of mine and my family's life'.

Participant 002404 hurried through the following eleven closed-ended questions as they needed to start their volunteer shift, but carefully chose their answers.
Question Fourteen: They think that they have only been a regular working member for two years. Their suggestion for how the co-op could better support their experience was to proliferate (to Canberra's south side).
Question Nineteen: Their desire to procure 'fresher, seasonally appropriate, less packaged food' and feel 'close to farmers', as well as 'the environmental impact of food miles' and the 'food security of the area' all contribute to their interest in locally produced foods.

Participant 002405:
This co-op working member has been volunteering at the co-op for four years, in a wide range of roles. They considered their answers carefully and this interview took around an hour in the co-op café space.
Question One: This participant's reasons for joining the co-op were initially all about sustainable food systems and waste minimisation (systemic). These reasons remain, but they now recognise that these 'shopping options make the community stronger'.
Question Two: The most important aspect of the co-op for them is 'the co-operating part' – problem-solving, having a say in, and learning how things run, and because 'many hands make light work'. They like making connections with a range of people of different ages, and with community groups, that they wouldn't usually meet. And they appreciate the unusual 'sort of autonomy of a shop owned by its members', with its' tangible benefits of ethically more affordable food', as well as the 'airy fairy' benefits of being part of 'a community that cares enough about the fair food system to volunteer their time'. They feel more potential as a consumer in being 'part of a movement', where 'strength in numbers' means that one's values can be enacted more powerfully.
Question Three: This member was already vegetarian, but reports having a more balanced wholefood diet since becoming a working member and shopping in bulk. They also now limit their dairy intake to 'better quality sources', which are more expensive, so dairy has become a treat rather than staple. They now care more about packaging, have started composting, and now 'take pride in fitting all their groceries on the bike'. They also feel they know more about 'community grassroots organisations' since being a co-op working member.
Question Four: This member feels that their values have not changed as a result of being a working member, as they were 'already on a path of food sovereignty', but they have been strengthened by 'seeing it play out in action'. They feel being involved at the co-op

necessitates 'pragmatism – how to balance all values at once?', and that that pragmatism 'adds nuance to choosing tradeoffs'. They think that the motivation to learn more about the local food system and grower's perspectives changed their conception of food miles. They feel more certain now that 'local growers profiting means that they then can look after their land better'. And that 'investment in looking after local communities equals reinvestment in our own community and our own local economy'.

Questions Five and Six: They felt that their initial perceptions of time and expense as barriers to involvement at the co-op were false, and that their first sense of being intimidated by the space was quickly overcome by 'sitting back and watching and learning'. They think that volunteering in Australia is in decline, and even in Canberra, which is known for having a higher rate of volunteer engagement. They believe time factors are mainly at play in this, and that co-op volunteers are mostly retirees or students who suffer less time constraints. They also wonder if people might be turned off by the co-op 'aesthetic' or by a perceived expense, as the co-op could be seen both as 'feral and grungy', as well as 'elite and wealthy'. They also suggest that some could find the place very 'culturally different and perhaps intimidating and alienating', but that 'adjustment is possible'. And they think that adjustment is also necessary to become used to less packaging and the inconvenience of 'slow shopping', and then of having a 'real human chat at the till', with 'people of differing abilities'.

This participant spoke passionately about the co-op's capacity for extending engagement with the wider community. They don't believe that most people are even aware of the co-op, and co-operatives in general. They believe that if more people understood the benefits of having a say in the running of their co-op there would be more interest in such entities.

Question Seven: They believe that values play a big part for people in shopping at, and in becoming members of the co-op, because if people were 'looking for cheap, quick, convenient, its not here'. They listed community, bulk foods, local foods and organic foods as reasons for involvement.

Question Eight: They ended this part of the interview with: 'being part of an active community is hard at times – having a bad experience might mean not coming back', but that 'the key learning of the co-op is not to shut yourself off'.

Question Fourteen: They have been a working member for four years. Their suggestions for the co-op are around their strong belief that the co-op needs to 'build capacity and stability', which means better renumeration for paid managers, and that more time is spent finding and keeping the right people. They state that as the managers are responsible for volunteer wellbeing, if staff are lacking 'then the volunteers have to pick up the slack and if that becomes the status quo, people are turned off'. They hope that the co-op sees improved processes, especially around 'people management', because 'inter-personal issues need to be directly dealt with, as the turmoil when not spirals to bigger issues'.

Question Nineteen: In regards to their interest in the local food system, they stated 'food miles, local economies and personal connection and contribution to the co-op'. They suggest that people come to the co-op to feel close to local farmers and that there should be 'farmer

stalls at the co-op and talks about growing practices'. Before their co-op membership they already volunteered, since being at the co-op, they volunteer with an urban farm initiative.

Participant 002406:
This co-op working member has been a member of the co-op for thirty-five years, and a working member for twenty. They have contributed many initiatives and practices to the co-op, and are a practical person of few but choice words. Their interview took about forty minutes in the co-op café space.
Question One: They initially came to co-op through a friend, remembering it as 'like a revolution in my life'. Their reasons for joining the co-op were instrumental in the desire to access healthy wholefoods with minimal waste, and also for 'the health of the environment' (values). But 'something deepened' along the way, and now they feel they have a better understanding of foods and food systems - and the co-op still aligns with their 'personal principles'.
Question Two: They find that 'other food systems in society are alienating', and the most important aspect of belonging to the co-op is the opportunity to be engaged, productive and contribute to the co-op's survival, alongside a diverse community that shares similar principles – 'the co-op is about its people'. They enjoy 'the space to hang out' – 'I wouldn't know where to go if we didn't have a food co-op'. And the bulk foods and minimal waste is still important, as well as the financial discounts an incentive.
Question Three: This member reports that the majority of their food is now procured at the co-op, and that they find themselves becoming more and more involved. Especially because the co-op 'supports women from culturally diverse backgrounds' as lunch cooks, and that 'engaging with them in this context' is a big part of what they themselves, and others, are now enjoying at the co-op.
Question Four: They don't feel their values changed as a result of the co-op. 'What I love about the co-op is the alignment of food and values' - and the 'access' to that. They do feel that being involved with the co-op has helped them to 'reflect and change food habits to align with the co-op'.
Questions Five and Six: They did not initially have any barrier to joining the co-op - they were a student then and had plenty of time, but when they started working full-time it became harder time-wise. They overcame this barrier by changing employment! For others, they imagine that the co-op could be alienating, as a different sort of a place. Some of their friends think the co-op is 'expensive and unclean, and the products unreliable'. But they explain that 'the true costs of our food' means that we should pay more for 'environmental

and ethical production', because 'cheap food has additional costs'. And that food at the co-op becomes cheaper with more volunteering.
Question Seven: They believe that 'community and environment' values have a lot to do with people becoming members of the co-op. They believe that recent years have seen more retired people joining the co-op with 'aligned principles'.
Question Eight: They wanted to add that a critical mass of membership at the co-op is needed, but that the widespread 'disillusionment in the duopoly and awareness of the corporatisation of the food system' has not really changed the pro-active food co-op membership much. They ask why, when most people are more reflective about 'transactional foods', are more people not changing their buying habits, and other Australian food co-ops closing?
For participant 002406, the following eleven closed-ended were quickly answered.
Question Fourteen: They have been a working member for twenty years, and their additional suggestions are around the need for an engagement of more working members at the co-op so that the 'same old people are not doing everything' – there needs to be a 'nice balance to lighten the load of those overstretched'.
Question Nineteen: Their interest in local foods is around transport emissions, and to build 'resilient food systems that aren't susceptible to food shocks like disasters and pandemics', and to support local small scale producers.

Participant 002407:
This co-op member started volunteering from the beginning of their co-op membership, thirty odd years ago. Their interview was a very quick one, taking under half an hour in the co-op office.
Question One: They originally came to the co-op with their flatmate of the time who was already a working member. They were new to Australia and wanted experience with the English language (instrumental/relational). They enjoyed it, wanted to support it, and their reasons for continuing with the co-op are still relational, as the co-op is their 'social fix', as

well as instrumental, as their credits 'contribute to their shopping list', with 'stuff they wouldn't buy at normal shops'.
Question Two: Contributing to the co-op gives them a 'sense of ownership', and a connection with 'nice people'. Being a regular working member makes them feel useful, 'like you know what's going on'. They feel that their 'inner drive of volunteering' at the co-op gives them a sense of 'self-worth and self-satisfaction'. The main benefit though, is access to good food that 'normally would not be purchased at health food shops with gay abandon'.
Question Three: Co-op involvement has meant that they now have an increased range of food preferences, particularly pulses and ferments. The more they know how the co-op works, the more involved they have become.
Question Four: They do not think that co-op involvement has directly changed their values, but its thirty years, so there was a sense that they don't know what they would be without it. They did not seem to set much stock in values per se.
Questions Five and Six: They felt that they did have 'internal barriers' to overcome to join the co-op, as they were 'unconvinced of their abilities', and 'self-doubted their language'. Barriers for others to join they guess might be financial, as people 'now need proper jobs', and time constraints, so that volunteering would be not prioritised. They have thought often about potential enablers for others in joining, and thinks the co-op 'needs young families with money', and an incentive would be the 'health aspect'.
Question Seven: They believe that values play a big part in people becoming members of the co-op – 'nobody steps in here without it' - 'if it were just financial, they wouldn't be here'. They think these values would be around supporting organic agriculture and not-for-profits, and to be part of the community.
Question Eight: Their last comments were 'how devastated they would be if the co-op folded', and that they 'get more out of the co-op than the co-op gets out of me'.
Question Fourteen: They have been a 'very happy' working member for thirty years but they do think the co-op could do with being more organised.
Question Nineteen: They are interested in local foods because of food miles and transport issues.

Participant 002408:
This interview took place in the co-op office and was about half an hour in length, with a co-op working member of six years, who joined the co-op upon arriving in Australia and who volunteers in a variety of roles.
Question One: They found the co-op through a flyer at an English-language school and joined in order to find a community, therefore with a relational reasoning. They were curious about

this 'unique shop', and report that they stay because 'it suits me'. They now enjoy the challenge, the responsibility and confidence it brings.
Question Two: The most important aspect of the co-op for them is the ability to volunteer and 'feel useful'. In their country of origin, volunteering itself is not common – they wondered at first 'why do more people do it here', and now think flexible volunteering is an 'amazing feeling'. They love the co-op, the community 'family thing', and the discounts, and want to 'contribute to its existence'.
Question Three: They feel that they now understand more about the reasons for organic growing techniques for 'environment and people', and so now they eat more organic foods. Also, the confidence that they feel was 'built at the co-op' has given them 'training for society and a proper job'.
Question Four: In regards to their values, they feel that since being a member of the co-op and meeting 'the people here', they value 'more than money' – 'organics, the environment and human rights'. They were 'educated here'.
Questions Five and Six: The barriers they had to overcome were around 'shyness'. They remember feeling 'so nervous', and that their 'english so poor', but that a 'variety of people and ages and nationalities' showed them 'kindness and tenderness', that 'everyone was so nice', so they 'relaxed'. They wonder if for others, the barriers to joining might be around perceptions of expense, lack of hygiene, or 'laziness' because of bulk shopping might play a part.
Question Seven: They don't know whether values could play a part in others becoming members of the co-op – because 'we are all so different', but that if they do, they would be around organics and health, because 'artificial things are so dangerous for the land'.
Question Eight: They ended these questions by adding that the co-op is 'my place now, my comfort zone'.
Participant 002408 really emphasised their values in the closed-ended questions.
Question Fourteen: After being a working member for six years their suggestion for the co-op is around better organising.
Question Nineteen: They are interested in local foods because of transportation and because they are 'better than a big coarse industrial farm' and the quality of the vegetables are better.

Participant 002409:
This older co-op working member has been volunteering at the co-op for three years in a variety of roles, after being a non-working member for some time previously. The co-op

reminds them of some small bulk shops in their country of origin. The interview took over an hour in the co-op café space.

Question One: Their reasons for joining the co-op were initially instrumental, as based around produce, but they immediately liked the community too. They first began volunteering to support the 'co-op's success', and continues to volunteer for that reason (systemic), and as a 'felt obligation', as 'someone who has enjoyed' the co-op and wants to 'repay the community' by 'sharing, giving, donating' (values).

Question Two: The most important aspects of the co-op to them is the 'social contact', and as a means of 'practicing small talk', as the co-op necessitates 'talking to strangers' and they did not feel they had those skills prior to membership. The wide range of organic food is also important to them, and the money saved from the working membership discounts too. They value the feeling of 'returning something to society' because 'survival requires caring for all, not just myself'. And they value that 'co-op profits translate to only employment, not pockets', rather than the 'capitalistic practice of profit'.

Question Three: They now eat more 'plant-based foods' – their 'first vegetarian meal was a co-op lunch', and they now cook vegetarian at least twice a week. They feel that the co-op has changed how sociable they are in general, that they are more talkative, 'reaching out to people more'. They 'see things differently' now, and because 'sharing is so important' it has become part of their 'decision-making in everything'. They feel they are more compassionate, seeing the commitment of 'people putting the hours in, making the shop a success, is so inspiring, and so interesting - to see these ways of conducting life'. And they think that as they are 'more happy and relaxed' as a result of being a working member, that 'happiness is infectious to others'.

Question Four: In regards to how they feel their values may have changed, they think that they now 'see the world not in terms of getting the cheapest, best value from things, everything', and they have realised that lots of money is unnecessary. They believe that 'time should not be wasted on inconsequential stuff'. They feel that because the co-op community is so diverse, they have been exposed to a 'wide variety of ideas' which has 'helped break tunnel vision' to 'see the world differently'. They mentioned that their time at the co-op has been their first time 'knowing the LGBTIQA+ community', and that now they realise that we are 'all just people, living together'.

Questions Five and Six: Other than some initial shyness, they did not feel as though there were any barriers to their joining the co-op. They suggest that shyness may be a barrier for others too. To overcome this, they think that 'existing members need to put people at ease by just talking to them'. They think that the co-op could encourage more members by more and different sorts of activities, for instance, 'the utilisation of urban fruit trees' in preserving workshops at the co-op, movie nights that are 'not necessarily political but inclusive', cooking activities for students, 'Sunday meals of seasonal produce', competitive 'cook-offs' run by the co-op chefs, and seed saver meal days.

Question Seven: They believe that the values at play in people's joining are sustainable, organic, fair foods, but that some join just for 'groceries', or as students who 'need lunch and snacks on campus'.

Question Eight: They added that the 'concept of co-op collapses without work', and that most of the volunteering at the co-op is done by women – 'how to get the men'?
Question Fourteen: They have been a working member for three years and they did not have any suggestions in regards to the co-op better supporting their experience.
Question Nineteen: They named food miles as their only reason for interest in locally produced food.

Participant 002410:
This young working member has been volunteering at the co-op for one year, participating as a co-ordinator. The interview took about forty minutes in the co-op café space.
Question One: They joined the co-op to volunteer at a suggestion from a friend at a co-op event (relational), but believes the discount for working to be significant (instrumental). They now think that volunteering at the co-op is also 'rewarding', in regards to feeling 'part of a team and community'.
Question Two: The most important aspects of working at the co-op for them are the lunches, the store credit, the 'structure to their week' that the co-op adds to their life, the 'degree of responsibility' and the 'nice space to drop by'. Their familiarity with the space now means they can 'drop in, and help out as an ongoing project'. And they get a 'sense of reward from volunteering'. They like shopping at a 'co-op not a shop'.
Question Three: They believe that their food preferences have somewhat changed since joining – they have discovered things like tempeh, tamari and legumes, and like eating more fresh foods seasonally now. They are more aware of organics and local foods when shopping outside of the co-op, always 'checking whether fruit is from Australia etc'. But they said that when cooking for the family, they would be 'straining at the bit' if they tried to make everything vegan or organic, so they don't.
Question Four: They feel that rather than their values having changed, what has changed for them is that they are more 'politically aware'. That because of the different groups who use the space, like 'food not bombs, the Greens, and students against war', they have become more involved in political activism. They said that 'its difficult to circumscribe core values', that its more 'what one chooses to be involved in, awareness and action'. These changes have come about because 'one of the distinctive features of the co-op is sitting with strangers over lunch and conversing'.
Questions Five and Six: In answer to whether there were initially any barriers to volunteering, they think that the degree of 'solo responsibility' in some roles is a challenge to begin with. They reflected that it 'could be difficult to be working member without familiarity with people already at the co-op'; even if familiar with the space. And 'the co-op means being with

people who might not be part of one's usual conversations in the world'. They think that new members need to feel more competent in the space, and that 'grounding an expectation that membership entails volunteering' would help, because the incentives to volunteer 'being solely an economic thing' is not enough.
Question Seven: They believe that the values at play in people becoming members of the co-op are 'community and aid, helping out, with the core value of a desire to contribute'. They don't think that political and food values are probably very strongly involved, as 'normal Canberrans are not really invested in organic food and leftist politics'.
Question Eight: They did not have any additional thoughts for question eight.
Question Fourteen: They have been a working member for one year now. They would like to have a better general awareness of how decisions are made at the co-op and a voice in those decisions – financial and operational.
Question Nineteen: They are interested in local foods because of 'the idea of it'. They think it tastes better too, and 'want to be in touch with the local environment, knowing when things are ripe – walking with the knowledge of the local environment'.

Participant 002411:
This co-op working member has also been volunteering at the co-op for one year. Their interview took place in the co-op during their volunteer shift and took about an hour with interruptions.
Question One: They joined the co-op because they 'liked the idea of what the co-op is about' – the friendly place and the food and lunches, the local organic produce, and less packaging – 'the main reasons people join'. They continue to volunteer for the same reasons (instrumental), but working as part of the community is now 'personal as well as getting a job done' (relational).
Question Two: The most important aspect of the co-op for them is that its 'personal and friendly', and that their 'diet has improved significantly'. They think its important that as they are 'giving their time and energy', that they get a say in decisions and new products, and that they are 'acknowledged, respected and supported' as a volunteer. And they want the co-op 'community to flourish'.
Question Three: As far as their food preferences are concerned, they believe they have 'significantly' changed. After eating almost exclusively meat, they are now 'virtually vegetarian'. Organic food was not important to them previously but now is, as is supporting local – and they are 'now prepared to spend more on these things'. This is reflected in their shopping outside of the co-op, but they now do not want to support big businesses – 'its made me question everything I purchase'.
Question Four: They do think their values have changed as a result of being a working member of the co-op, because they have 'more awareness of what I'm eating'; a sense of

community – 'working together and sharing information'; and 'a better way of living'. They feel that they have changed in regards to being solely a task-oriented person, now 'seeing that community is more important than just finishing a task'.
Questions Five and Six: They felt that there were significant barriers to their starting to volunteer. They felt 'almost unwelcome', but overcame that by 'just being here' and receiving 'nice training'. They think that those barriers would be similar for others. And that the co-op may seem expensive and unstructured, and therefore not 'accessible to low-income people, or to older migrant women, and people with disabilities'. But that the co-op could play a role 'in people's learning journeys'. They mentioned parking and transport as other barriers. To encourage more people to become involved, they thought more activities in the evenings and on the weekends for those who wouldn't usually be around would be good.
Question Seven: They believe that values are 'highly involved' in people becoming members of the co-op – 'they don't join otherwise'. They think that 'wanting to help others' and give to the community, while 'valuing yourself' and feeling like you are participating are the values that come into play. They also said that they have 'realised that you can't force the co-op down people's throats – that if someone wants the co-op they will find the co-op'.
Question Eight: They did not have any additional thoughts for question eight.
Question Fourteen: They have been a working member for one year - and did not have any suggestions in regards to the co-op better supporting their experience.
Question Nineteen: They talked about 'the environmental impacts of transport', and 'community support for small growers' as their reasons for being interested in local foods.

Participant 002412:
This co-op working member has been volunteering at the co-op for two decades, by participating in facilitating operations and in other various different roles. This interview took about forty minutes in the co-op office.
Question One: They were at the co-op as a child, then rejoined as an older teenager of their own volition, primarily to access bulk foods (instrumental). Their primary reasons for continued and committed involvement is 'almost primarily social – its not cheap oats anymore' (relational).
Question Two: The most important aspect of being part of the co-op for them is to be 'part of something bigger and more meaningful than my own life'. A 'community of shared values' and 'welcoming environment' gives them a 'feeling of belonging', fulfilling 'basic human needs'.
Question Three: As far as food preferences, they are far 'more into organics now'.

Question Four: They feel their values have changed as a result of being a working member. Their 'community and social values have grown' through 'exposure to the benefits of that', so therefore 'the co-op itself as institution is more important' to them now.
Questions Five and Six: Although they did not feel as though there were real barriers to their joining, they do remember feeling like they didn't fit in, feeling 'other than hippy or uni student', and don't remember making friends there for the first five or ten years. They now feel the co-op is a' much more social space than in the nineties' and that they have made strong 'connections in the co-op community'. From the start, they report needing to feel they had 'something to contribute', and believe that support from management, and just working there helped them become comfortable. They think that there may be a perception of the co-op as having an 'alternative, cliquey, niche demographic', which may be barriers for some in joining. Having more diverse activities centered at the co-op will encourage 'new demographics' to join, for instance, 'the recyclery'.
Question Seven: They believe that values do play the main part in people becoming members of the co-op – 'for most people it's a values choice not financial…more being a part of it than getting a discount'. These values they believe to be 'alternative economies' and 'valuing social spaces'.
Question Eight: Their additional comment was that they have 'met some of the most important people in my life here'.
The close-ended questions revealed that participant 002412 gets most of their food from growing their own, and that there never seems to be enough time to grow all that they would like.
Question Fourteen: They have been a working member for more than twenty years and their suggestion for a better functioning co-op is that 'somehow the managers need to be able to get a historical perspective on how the co-op functions'.
Question Nineteen: Their reason for being interested in locally produced food is 'the farmers!' Because then you can 'potentially be involved in their growing', or at least have a chance to meet them.

Participant 002413:

This co-op working member has been very regularly volunteering at the co-op for seven years now. Their interview took about forty minutes in the co-op office.

Question One: Their reasons for joining the co-op were around 'eco' values – low packaging, low waste, and sustainable ethical food systems (values), as well as a place to get their 'hard to find' baking ingredients (instrumental). These reasons 'still stand', but now include the 'community, friends and connections' (relational), and 'the bigger picture of the co-op'.

Question Two: The most important part of the co-op for them is the community and friends, as well as having access to discounted, ethically sourced, low-packaged, healthy, nourishing food, and co-op lunches. 'Keeping the co-op going' for these reasons, and supporting local producers is really important to them (systemic).

Question Three: Finding the co-op community after personal life changes has meant that 'so much has changed' for them as a result of being part of the co-op. Their 'confidence was so low in private life', and the 'appreciation for jobs well done' changed their self-esteem - 'the co-op builds confidence'. As far as their food preferences, they report that since joining the co-op they no longer use 'mass produced, processed foods', they are cooking more vegetarian and vegan meals, with 'unusual ingredients' that have changed their recipes, and that they feel the 'benefit of organics' - 'good food means happiness and health, and health is wealth'.

Question Four: They believe their values have changed because they have 'never been exposed to co-operative functioning before', and exposure to this has led to their 'seeing the value of everyone pitching in and helping out', where the 'whole is greater than the parts', and it has changed their life 'here and elsewhere'. They feel more strongly about the values that initially led to them joining ('organics and community'), and that kindness is now more important in their life, because 'there is lots of that here, and elsewhere it is hard to find' – 'its not encouraged elsewhere, but here you can be'.

Questions Five and Six: They felt that the barriers to their joining was a lack of confidence and self-esteem, as well as personal life issues at the time, and that the experience of joining was 'a little bit overwhelming', but also 'new and fresh'. They felt that their time-constraints were helped by the fact that the co-op opens late during the week until 7pm. Other enablers for them was knowing that they were doing a good job and 'feeling appreciated', as well as 'the kindness of others'. Barriers for other people could be around time and family, and also around confidence, and having English as a second language, 'but the co-op is welcoming'. They think that more people would be interested in the co-op if they could see the benefits of the co-op as 'not just a shop', but 'its family here, looking out for each other and helping each other'.

Question Seven: They believe that values are at play in membership – 'the eco-aspect and the cooperative aspect'.

Question Eight: They didn't have additional thoughts to close, except to express that they hoped people would 'please join and volunteer'.

Question Fourteen: They have been a working member for seven years and their ideas for a better experience at the co-op involve more working members, as 'the more people there are volunteering, the easier it is'.

Question Nineteen: Their interest in local foods is around 'food miles' and to 'support the local people around you', because 'if everyone ate local the world would be a different place'.

Participant 002414:

This co-op working member has been volunteering at the co-op in a few different roles for around four years now. Their interview took about half an hour in the co-op café space.

Question One: Their reasons for joining the co-op were instrumental – they wanted 'something extra to do' after retirement. They now love the 'ethics of not-for-profit', the 'co-operative nature of the volunteer ethos', and that the co-op is 'a safe and social space for diversity' (values, systemic and relational).

Question Two: They see recycling and packaging as 'a drop in the ocean really', and that the most important part of being part of the co-op is that it's a 'not-for-profit co-operative, and there are so few public spaces not around profit-making', and the co-op is just 'always here'. They like the lunches, the variety of foods, the discounts, being part of the bigger organisation, and the 'mix of people, everyone pitching in':

'as a whole package, it fills a gap – the flexible, volunteer nature…co-operative - like work, but not work'.

Question Three: As for what has changed for them since being part of the co-op, they find that they now eat different bulk products especially dried fruits and nuts, more fresh produce, and the bulk dairy options from the co-op. They are 'more conscious of packaging and the profit-making aspects of the food supply chain'

Question Four: They believe their values have changed from 'seeing how the co-operative process works', because the 'costs of where food comes from' is now more apparent.

Questions Five and Six: They don't feel that there were any barriers to their joining. For others, they think that some barriers might be around training and inductions, or too much formalised bureaucracy. They think that training people and keeping them around can be hard work, and that its very important that the right people are in the right roles. They think that the lack of 'ease of shopping' is a barrier to more people volunteering, as the 'isolation' of the co-op, so far away from the suburbs, with little parking is a problem.

Question Seven: They are not sure that values are always at play in membership - 'for some yes, probably really important', for instance, 'not-for-profits, co-operatives, and less packaging'. But for others, its 'the nice lunches and produce'.

Question Eight: They didn't have additional thoughts to close, except to express that the co-op is a 'positive experience'.

Question Fourteen: They have been a working member for over four years and their idea for a better co-op is a good management team.

Question Nineteen: They think its 'good to support local foods' because of 'food miles' and also 'to rely on each other in the old-fashioned way', because of 'armeggedon' – 'we're all going to starve'.

Participant 002415:
This co-op working member has been volunteering at the co-op for five years in different ways. This was a quick interview of about half and hour in the co-op café space.
Question One: They joined the co-op for instrumental reasons around accessing specialty ingredients such as grains and lentils. Now, although affording better foods with volunteering discounts is still important, the community and 'staying connected, with positive social interactions' is more important to them (relational).
Question Two: The most important aspect of being part of the co-op for them is being 'actively engaged and giving back', in 'simple ways, and a breadth of ways'. They said that the 'food sovereignty philosophy of anti-capitalist ways of engaging with the food system aligns with my values'. The benefits to them of the co-op specifically is being connected to the community, the friendships, and also accessing affordable foods at a 'hospitable, positive, accepting' place, because 'shopping can be soul-less'. They elaborated that 'disconnection is easy in society'. The co-op credits and discount system offers them 'a way of life choices…able to not have to earn as much'. They believe that the co-op 'gives back to community', not just through 'waste reduction and ethical food sourcing', but that the broader benefit is that of offering members the choice 'to to engage in a community'.
Question Three: They feel the co-op has enabled them to be 'more radical' in their way of thinking about and engaging with the food system, and helped to create a 'very different life/work balance'. As far as food preferences, they no longer shop at supermarkets - 'not for years now'. They already 'had a preference for local and ethical foods', but their 'awareness has increased, and so has their preference for them'.
Question Four: They feel their values have changed over the years, 'not only because of the co-op, but consistently, regularly, being around others making the same changes, normalises, makes less strange, making those changes more achievable'. They feel that they are more 'open to advocating for that' now – they are 'outspoken about their changes to family and friends'.
Questions Five and Six: Barriers: They say that when they first joined, they were working fulltime and because 'the visible volunteering roles are during work hours' they didn't feel able to be as involved at the co-op. They felt that not knowing other members, or 'having friends outside the community doing those things' was a barrier too. Also, they felt that shopping at the co-op was a 'bit bewildering to begin with'. They feel their decision to

change careers enabled them to get more involved, and by that stage they also had made a friend who worked at the co-op. For others, possible barriers might be similar – 'no knowledge of co-op roles'; 'afraid to commit because of unknowns and if they will like it'; 'intimidated by the hippyness'; 'meateaters worried about vegans and judgemental co-op-ers'. They think that there could be more communication of the variety of volunteer roles, and that the existing co-op working members could have a 'bring-a-friend' day to work.
Question Seven: They believe that values 'around sustainability and food ethics' play a role for some in involvement, but for others its about 'convenience on campus'.
Question Eight: Their additional comment was that they really love being able to request and give feedback on products at the co-op – several of their suggestions are now standard at the co-op.
For participant 002415 the close-ended questions revealed that most of their food procurement is from a CSA, and that they get a lot of food from homegrowns and crop swaps.
Question Fourteen: They did not have further suggestions for co-op changes.
Question Nineteen: Their reasons for being interested in locally produced foods: 'local produce is a hugely important part of building community, improving the health of people, land and environment, and essential is securing food in a climate crisis'.

Participant 002416:
This relatively new co-op working member has been a working member of the co-op for one year. Their interview took about an hour in the co-op café space.
Question One: They initially came to co-op through speaking with a co-op coordinator who told them about the roof-top garden, which is why they joined up and this is their same reason for continuing (instrumental), as well as for the community (relational).
Question Two: The benefits of being a part of the co-op for them definitely include the gardening team, which is like a 'little community at the co-op'. Being 'practical and social together' meant that they were 'an automatic part of community and network' (relational). 'you know who you're working with and you know who you're working for'
They appreciate the diversity of age groups in the team, 'to really make connection and navigate life'.
The quality of the food and lunches, and 'the people that make and grow the food cannot be separated', and is of most importance to them. The premise itself also is important, as 'a space during the day to be able to always see others for conversation'. They believe that 'we neglect the convening power of real spaces as opposed to the online' at our peril, and that the 'randomness of life is to be cherished'. They are:

'…trying to understand whats really going on and only can through tangible interactions rather than assumptions. Life presents opportunities to break down our assumptions about people and life'.

They also mentioned the discounts as of benefit.

Question Three: This member reports that since joining the co-op they have experienced personal change - 'the experience of the co-op has made me more certain of what I want to do'.

'experience full scale of spectrum…push space to accept diversity of people and values…it's a very diverse community'.

'if you live one life on your own you only experience that. But here, bumping into people, having conversations, little sharings really enrich understandings and changes experience – the melting pot here gives that opportunity'.

They say that they now know more ways to make vegan foods, though are not vegan necessarily.

Question Four: They feel that their values have been 'reinforced', because of the 'generosity of the people here, working together and talking', sharing time and food 'like a family', which you 'don't find everywhere'. They feel they are 'more true to self' now, and have changed around what other people think of them.

Questions Five and Six: They did not initially have any barrier to joining the co-op. But they do think better inductions would be helpful, so as to know more about the full operations of the co-op – they had to gain context and learn gradually through chatting and research. They think that there is a lack of opportunity for others to 'discover the co-op', who might be living 'a lifestyle of take-aways' which 'prevents an interest in healthier foods'. They believe that people can overcome this barrier if they can see 'the longterm environmental impacts and wellbeing impacts of food on oneself'. They think that the co-op should provide more stories of the suppliers, and the origins of the foods, to 'give personal attachment to the foods'.

Question Seven: They think that trying to measure whether people's values are at play in joining is too difficult. They believe that people would say yes if asked whether they valued health and wellbeing, but what people actually do is something different, impacted by time and convenience etc, not values. They think that one 'shouldn't use values to differentiate people', but instead ask ' how do we understand and co-exist with people who share different values?' – 'how do we use what we have to bring people together?'. We 'all have different histories and values, but everyone can be here drinking tea'. They questioned again the necessity of having to have the same values, in order to do the same thing:

'values and discipling is for oneself not others – caring and sharing is how we relate - so often our values are not applied to self, but put upon others – values need only be applied to self – caring instead as way of working together'.

Question Eight: They added that they 'like this feeling here, the space is open for all to navigate without pressure – sharing laughter and food – what else do you need?'

The eleven closed-ended questions revealed that participant 002416 has spent time overseas participating in various CSA movements.

Question Fourteen: They have been a working member for one year and their suggestion is around more member gatherings in different co-op spaces, up in the garden, the kitchen etc.

Question Nineteen: They do have interest in local foods but wanted to caveat that they do not advocate for entirely local foods. 'Meeting, knowing and forming relationships' with the growers is of main interest to them. They added also that feeling close to the farmers has the practical outcome of caring about their growing practices and food produced, regardless of the different techniques – they appreciate adherence to, for instance, organics, but being flexible in food procurement, because not necessarily an option for some growers in some places.
'what is human agency? The body filters toxins, the brain can filter also – only getting 'good' things is maybe not always good for our wellbeing'.

Participant 002417:
This co-op working member has been volunteering at the co-op for two years in a number of different ways. The first part was a very long interview of over an hour in the co-op store-room, the second part also an hour in the office.
Question One: They joined the co-op for the instrumental reason a hot lunch after passing by and smelling the aroma, although had also been interested in the concept of co-operatives for some time and aware that the food co-op was their most local actual way of getting involved in one (systemic). They knew of the co-op from their Mum who was one of the original members. They joined as a non-working member for about a year before volunteering. They are 'more invested in the longevity of the co-op' now, and have a sense of 'responsibility and pride' in its 'financial concerns and continued success'. Their reasons for continued involvement are because 'the co-op is run on the time and energy of members' and they had asked themselves, what can one middle-aged retiree do about all this' and the answer was 'build from the ground up' – they are ever more interested in co-operatives generally (systemic). They talked about capitalism, and that 'smashing the system as revolution' wasn't their style, but to instead, as 'Buckminster Fuller says, work within the system in a new way until the old one falls away'. They are interested in the 'federative of co-ops' and listed Mondragon in Spain, an Argentinian tile factory, a poultry co-operative in S.A,

housing and power co-ops, and 'the wider co-op community' as examples of why they are involved.

Question Two: The most important aspect of being part of the co-op is the sense of ownership and that it is a way of connecting with all these ideas – 'a working co-operative, where everyone has ownership of the levers' - rather than just 'abstract conversation about these things'. Their 'mental ground had been prepared for the co-op by readings', and the online REDDIT co-op conversations. They believe that the co-op runs effectively because of how members relate to each other. The most important thing to them right now is the co-op's continuity, and they will stay in 'the engine room' until they have contributed what they need to contribute – they think that their 'involvement needs completion' and that 'their temperament' would 'nag' at them if they didn't make 'a proper job' of it. The co-op is an unusual 'social setting' in their life, with a 'different crowd', and so different to what's done with the rest of their time, in which they are 'quite solitary'. They enjoy having problems to solve with people who wouldn't otherwise be in their life. They think this 'hands-on' aspect balances their life – giving them structure and getting out of the house, and that their 'identity, self, memories are invested in the place now, and not easily separated' – they 'feel better for having it, and it would be a felt loss' if they stopped.

Question Three: They said that since joining as a working member, the co-op has allowed them to 'understand and demystify how all the moving parts work' in an organisation such as this, whereas their 'head for business' wasn't great in the past. The co-op has become very important to them. They see 'sustainability stuff' and the foods available at the co-op 'as a nice side benefit' of being a working member, but that didn't and doesn't feature in their reasoning for involvement, which is all around co-ops. In regards to food preferences, they are a lot more aware and attuned to vegetarian cooking, eating less meat and appreciating spices and seasonings now. Their skills around cooking from 'basic foods built from raw ingredients' have improved.

Question Four: They don't know if their values have changed since joining – 'not aware of it – hard to tell from the inside'.

Questions Five and Six: They didn't experience any barriers to joining, but perceive that for others time, distance travelling, and making an income would be a possible barrier. They think that this community is centered around the local populace, which 'shapes how members relate – those close by relate differently' and that visiting with a car is a different proposition to with a bike .

Question Seven: They believe that values have a 'strong correlation' with membership. The discounts are of interest, but the conversations they overhear at new member inductions 'indicate values-based and political' reasons – 'the vibe is definitely values, and the people see themselves as having values'.

Question Eight: They did not have additional comments.

Question Fourteen: They suggested a better online portal or member's hub.

Question Nineteen: The reasons given for being interested in locally produced foods were 'from intuitive to academic' – 'shorter supply chains less able to be hijacked by chokepoint capitalism, knitting together better resilient communities with grassroots, peer to peer ties', and that it is 'faintly ridiculous to eat food literally produced across the world'.

Participant 002418:

This co-op working member has been volunteering at the co-op for at least fifteen years in quite a few different ways. This was a quicker interview after their shift which took about forty minutes in the co-op office.

Question One: They joined the co-op for purely instrumental reasons after a talk at work about health issues. They wanted a wide variety of nuts and seeds and 'wandered in off the streets'. They are now more interested in the not-for-profit aspect and co-ops in general (systemic/values?), and the sense of community they get at the co-op (relational).

Question Two: The most important aspect of being involved with the co-op for them is being actively involved in, and giving to, community – of being part of 'something bigger than self'. They like that 'people know who you are here' – 'its like cheers without being in a bar (where everyone knows your name)'. They report that the co-op adds value to their life and day, and that volunteering for credit helps them to keep working but 'not to have a real job'. The co-op 'functions outside the system', and its 'an easy way to be a rebel…to do something good,'. They said they want to be able to tell the young people that 'we tried when the world went to shit'. They also appreciate the variety of packaging-free foods, and the larger discounts for volunteering members than non-working members.

Question Three: They report that being involved at the co-op 'factored into their decision to leave fulltime work', it was 'their pathway out of corporate life'. They attribute changes in their diet, such as vegetarianism, as not necessarily a result of joining the co-op – it was part of the 'journey itself', but that the co-op 'makes it easier to be vegetarian and meat-free'. They try out new things now and are more dairy-free.

Question Four: They don't feel their values have changed, but that the co-op enables them to live in tune with their values. They feel that they are more politically aware now and have been exposed to different ideas at the co-op, for instance, they are 'more aware of trans rights'.

Questions Five and Six: Barriers for them initially were around time management and shyness - at first they felt intimidated and overwhelmed. Back then there was 'less love here than nowadays' – it was an 'old, dark and dingy demountable' and nobody was there to explain how to shop. They think that management has in the past sometimes been 'cliquey'. Overcoming these barriers necessitated meeting 'nicer people' from the co-op, and specifically a friend who had become involved made them 'aware you could do it' (but being a working member of the community sometimes still creates 'tough months'). They believe that for others possible barriers might be ones similar to their own - that coming to the co-op could be 'intimidating', with 'the loud lunchtimes with young people everywhere', and also that the shopping process and parking options could be perceived as difficult. They think that

if others could realise that the co-op is member-run, and that volunteering there is a 'better return for investment of time', more people would want to be involved.
Question Seven: They believe that values play a 'huge part' for some in becoming a member, and for others 'not at all except for the cheaper lunches value!'. They think that the values supporting membership would include 'organic farming methods, the systems approach for landcare, minimal packaging and plastic free, low-waste and bulk, supporting local, fair-trade, and not supporting the duopoly' – as many are now more informed after the 'recent commission into the supermarket's price-gouging'.
Question Eight: Their did not have an additional comment.
Question Fourteen: Their suggestion after 15 years at the co-op is around engagement between management and working members, and that the store credit amount as incentive ought to be raised.
Question Nineteen: Their reasons for being interested in locally produced foods is mainly because they are 'more likely to actually meet the people' growing the foods, and food miles. They believe that 'people are too far removed from food production', and it we know the people then we value the produce more – 'its special when you know the person who grew it'. They also like being aware of what's available when, and the costs of food production – they like eating foods that are more appropriate to time of year.

Participant 002419:
This co-op working member has been volunteering at the co-op for twenty-six years in the same role! This was an interview of about an hour over lunch in the co-op store-room.
Question One: They joined the co-op for values-led reasons around not-for-profits, and their reasons remain the same, though are more important now to them (systemic?). It was so very different to everything else around at that time, and their awareness is greater than ever of 'the value of these institutions'.
Question Two: The most important aspect of being part of the co-op for them is being able to have input into its functioning and management. 'If I want something to continue, then effort is required' and its 'an important outlet' (and this member's other volunteering engagements are also very important to them). They appreciate that the co-op is 'not an anonymous capitalist enterprise'. Its important that it is open to everybody, and the 'sustainability stuff'- minimising waste, source of local foods, and the bulk foods in both small and large quantities.
Question Three: Since joining, they feel that in 'some cohorts' their age has changed how they are responded to these days. But the co-op stays pretty much the same and 'ultimately

does what it says on the tin'. They appreciate too, that there has always been the provision to exempt from volunteering those who might not be able to physically contribute, and can still receive the discounts if desired. They really appreciate the cheap nutritious lunches and the offering of the space as a resource to the bigger community as meeting place. Being at the co-op with the expanse of vegetarian products opened their eyes to what is available, but they were already open to this because of their friends.

Question Four: They feel their values have not changed, they 'were already volunteering in leftwing political activity – one has to pitch in'. But their socio-political concerns have broadened, so now they believe the co-op is a very important organization. They think that 'founding something like this now would be more difficult – the co-op is not easily duplicated because of market conditions', and 'something like the co-op, as a student initiative which broadened to the community, just wouldn't get up again'.

Questions Five and Six: They didn't have any barriers to joining. They said that they couldn't really think that for others there would be too many possible barriers either, except for physical injury etc, in which case the exemptions previously mentioned can be applied – 'to each according to his needs, etc etc'. They think that promotion and outreach of the co-op, especially to people in the area, would be how to encourage others to join.

Question Seven: They believe that values have a part to play in people's involvement, especially for new-comers to the ACT, and that the not-for-profit aspect would be why people come to the co-op instead of just shopping at a bulk foods health shop. 'Plus it costs less here'.

Question Eight: Their additional comment was around the co-op being such an important resource needing sustaining….

Question Fourteen: After twenty-six years, they did not have any suggestions for the co-op.

Question Nineteen: They listed as their reasons for being interested in locally produced foods that they were 'not oblivious, because of ABC rural' – that they are 'cognizant of the plight of farmers', and they 'to the extent we can' buy 'closer, because of transport, food miles'.

Participant 002420:

This member has been working at the co-op for over ten years, in a number of different capacities, and this conversation took place in the co-op store-room, taking over an hour.

Question One: They joined the co-op for systemic reasons around 'the climate crisis and the extractive food industry'. The co-op gave them the 'realisation there were other ways to do it'. Their reasons for continued involvement are 'similar, but it feels more important now', they are concerned for 'the survival of the co-op', plus they are 'connected to friends who are connected here now' (relational).

Question Two: The most important aspect of being part of the co-op is the 'good nutritious food'; and 'being part of a community that cares collectively, who are willing to work together to create something better' in a 'space where people can put ideas into practice'….'doing what you said you'd do and thinking of the co-op – how its going, what it needs and sharing the values of co-operation'. The co-op is a 'considerate place, thoughtful of the planet and ourselves', and 'where profits are saved rather than making someone else rich'.

The benefits are the discounts, and that connection and bonding of being able to 'experiment in how to make decisions collectively'. 'Many people's minds working together' is fun, interesting, empowering and bonding. It is 'satisfying to overcome the challenges of conflict, cockroaches and finances'. 'The co-op is a special place in what can be an industrialised, exploitative, extractive, numb world'.

Question Three: They feel that since joining the co-op, they have learnt a lot of skills, in conflict resolution, time-management, problem-solving, and people skills. They feel that they were 'more anxious and nervous, not as confident speaking to people or figuring stuff out'. This came about because of their 'feeling of investment, meant that problems needing figuring out rather than stepping away'. They made so many lasting friendships and found house-mates and 'an amazing sharehouse' from the co-op. The co-op changed their food preferences from a diet of really not eating well, to 'lentils – a lot more lentils and free bread, and chocolate pepitas!'.

Question Four: They feel their values deepened. They say they have the 'same values, but learnt how to practice them here'. They are 'glad they haven't had to compromise'. They think that the co-op 'space and the people in it' prompted this. Because one can 'practice one's values more often' - the 'time and energy together' with others 'all keen to be caring, co-operative and doing it ourselves'. What has changed is that their 'motivation was all about survival of the climate crisis, but the community space brings together issues about justice for all types of people…like First Nations justice…which practices and processes to make it possible for everyone to participate…more space for voices that are excluded, silenced or not taken as seriously'.

Questions Five and Six: The barrier for them was that 'nobody followed up with them' after expressing interest in joining, so 'persistence was needed'. For others, they think that barriers exist because 'a certain amount of money is needed to survive, which means not enough time to participate…[so] a certain mentality is needed to make the money to survive…its tricky figuring out what you really do and don't need. If you can, you can have more community and time'. As well, they think that the co-op could be 'socially overwhelming if you didn't know anyone already here'. Because 'it's a social space'. To overcome this they think the co-op should have more couches and be more comfy, so people can hang out and ask questions.

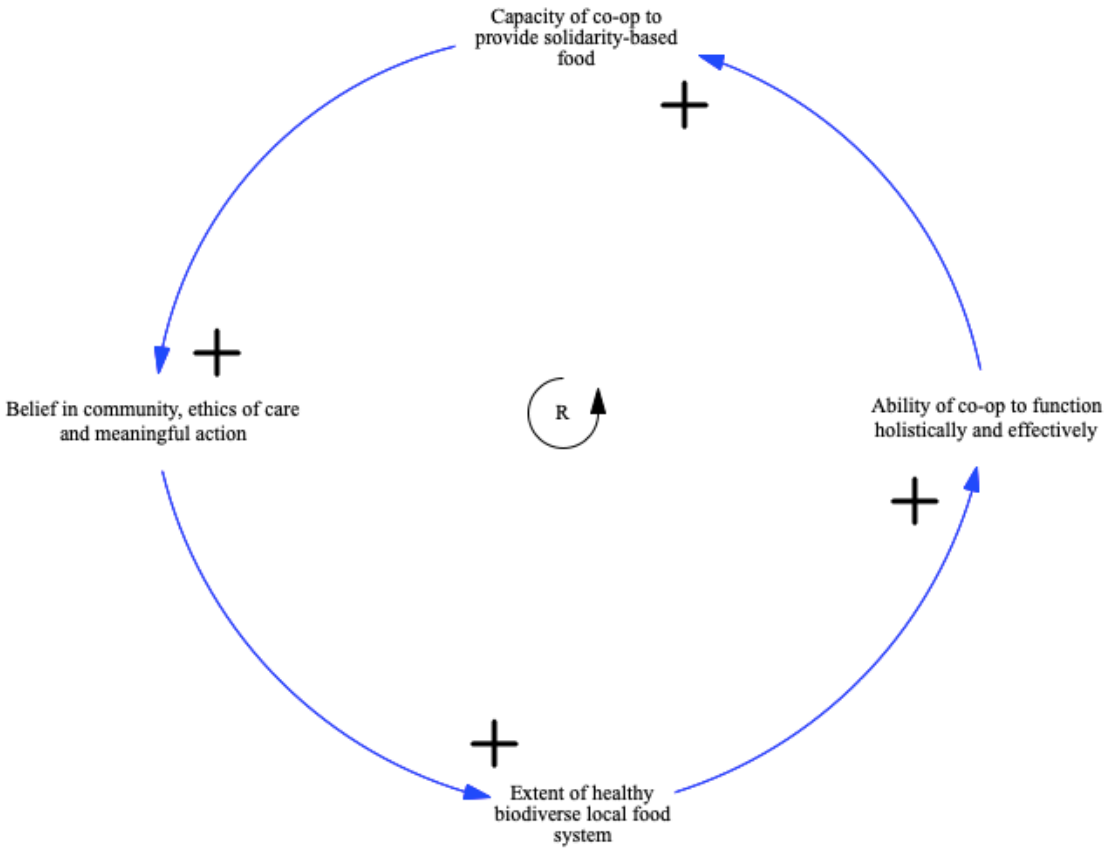
Question Seven: They believe that values are 'quite a lot' at play in becoming a co-op member, because 'its very values-based'. Its 'an active decision', people could easily just shop elsewhere. The values people probably hold are around community and cooperatives; and waste minimisation and environmental issues.

Question Eight: Their additional comments: they were nineteen years old when they initially joined, and it was 'rare then to hangout with different ages, feeling equals'. The connections made with a 'diversity of people and other ages and cultures from different places', gave them 'space to share to understand better and a sense of how big the world is'.
Participant 002420 answered the eleven closed-ended questions thoughtfully and added these reflections: when deciding on whether price is important issue for them in regards to food procurement, they said that it was both very important and of no importance, as there are 'ways around it' - by dumpster diving, and growing, which is how they get almost all their foods. They also said that they can 'understand the grower's experiences at the markets' and can picture the growers at the co-op, but never when 'dumpstering or at the supermarket'.
Question Fourteen: They didn't have further suggestions for the co-op.
Question Nineteen: Their reasons for being interested in locally produced foods is for 'partially understanding how we can survive locally – and its also beautiful to know how food grows locally and the environment'.

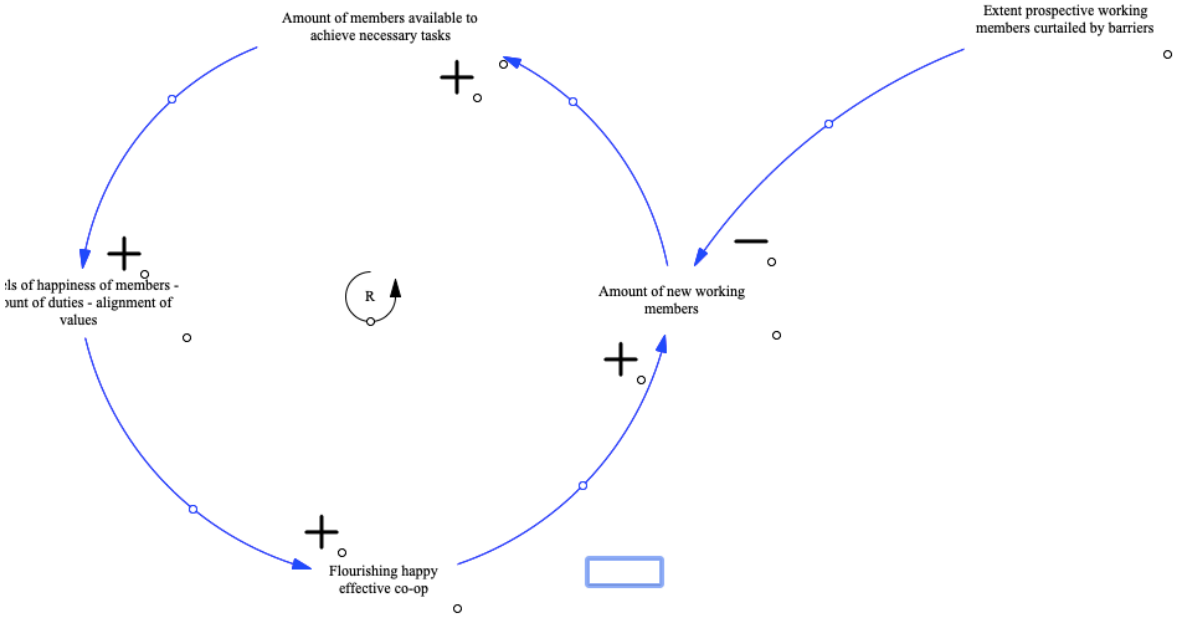
Appendix D

Systems Diagrams

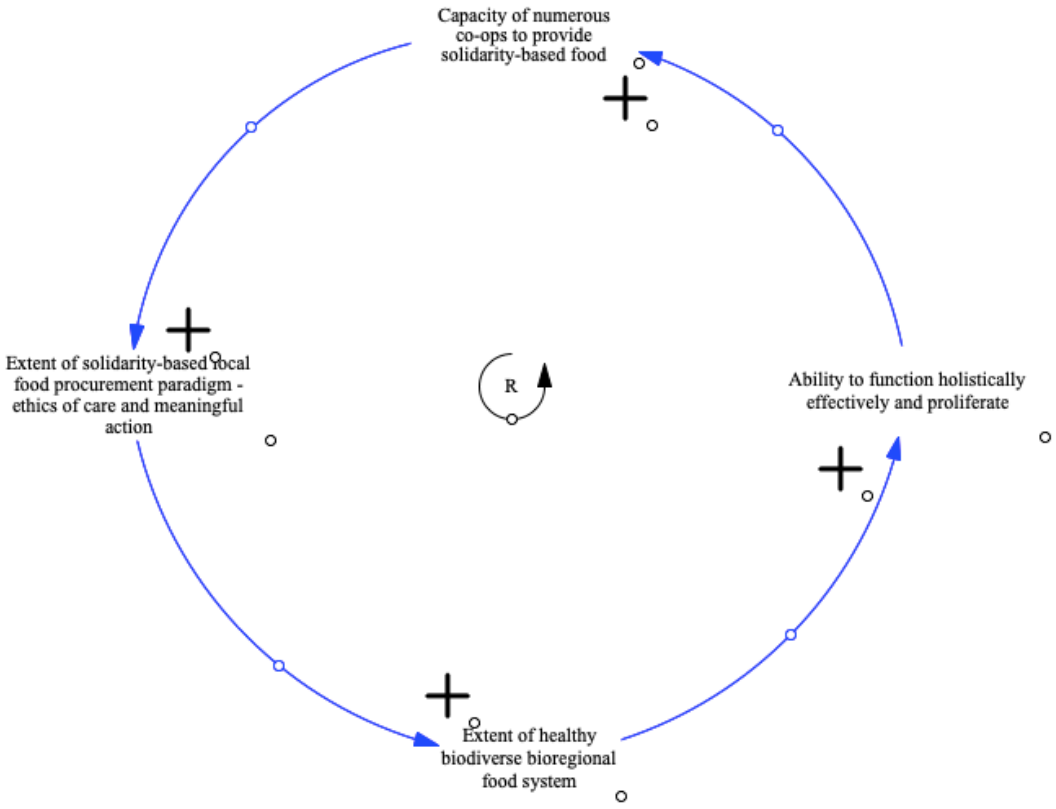
Basic Reinforcing Feedback Loop:
Functions of effective co-op:



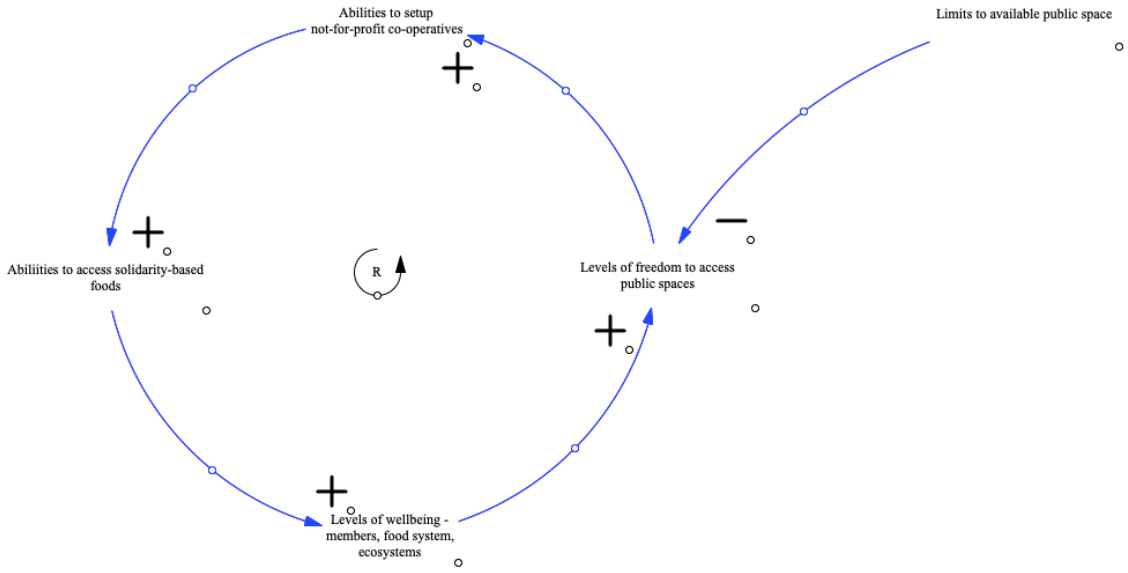
Basic Reinforcing Feedback Loop, with external variable:
Working Members:



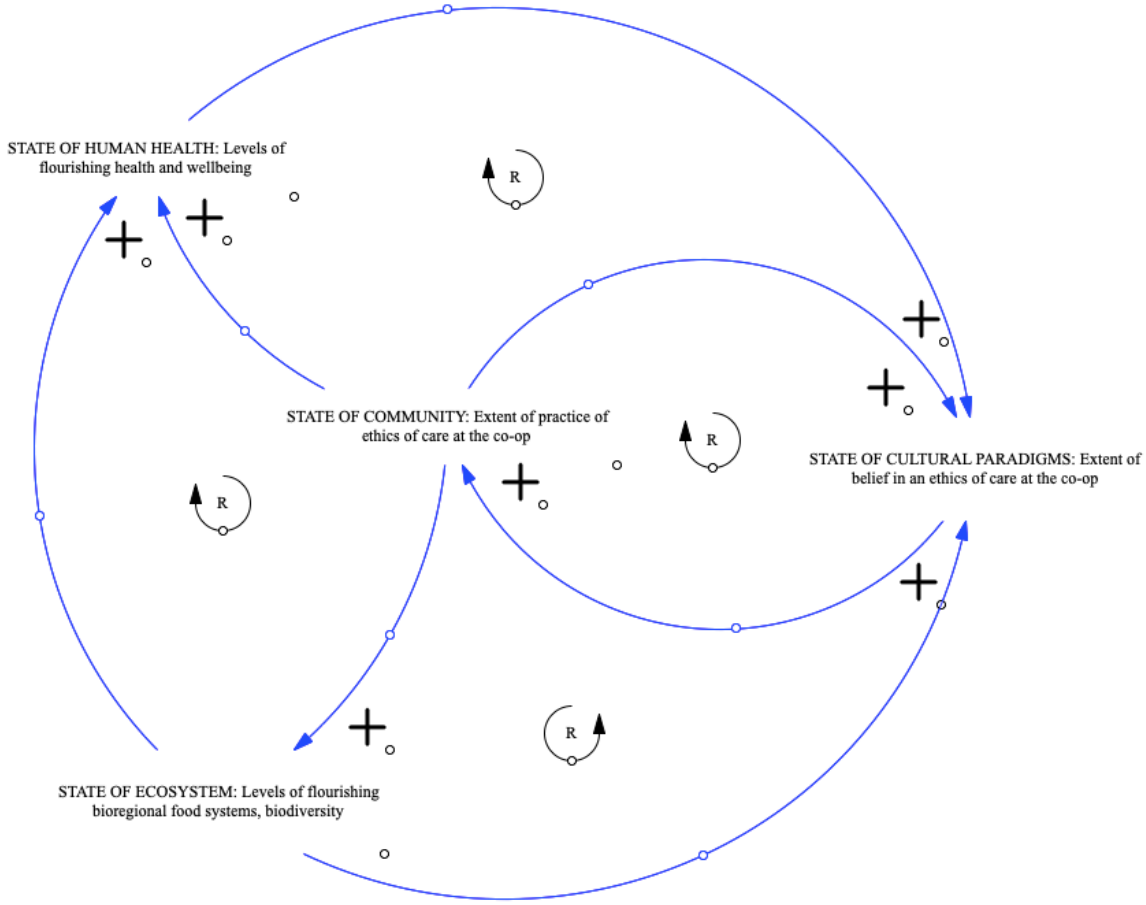
Basic Reinforcing Feedback Loop:
The co-op and the bioregional food system:



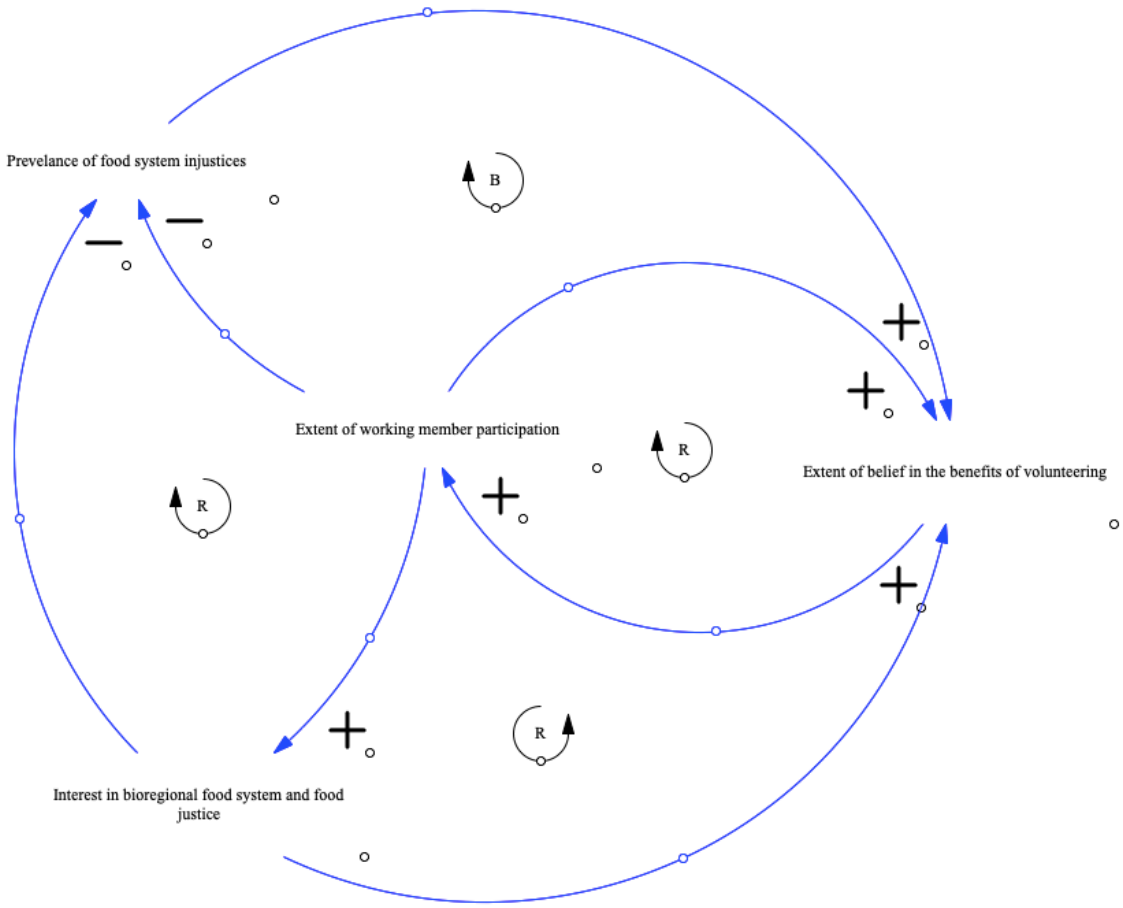
Basic Reinforcing Feedback Loop, with external variable:
Public space:



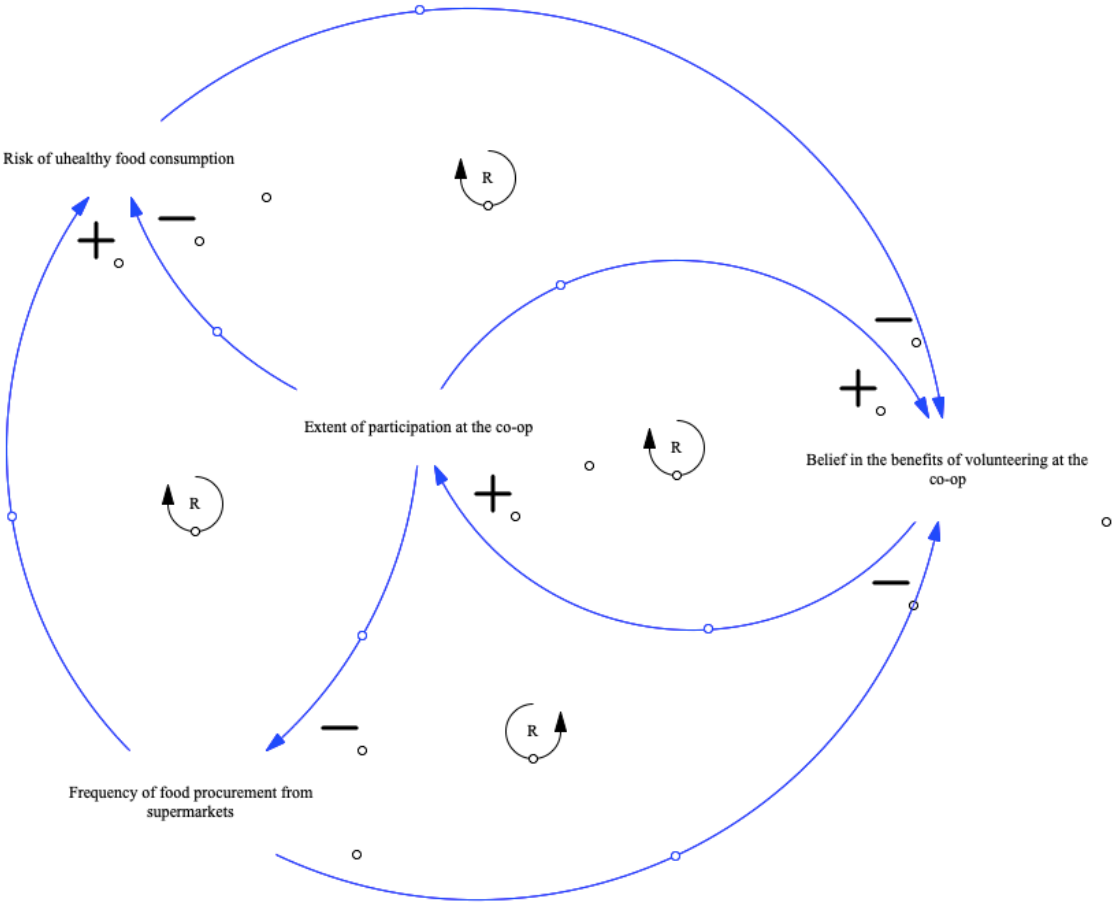
Cultural Adaptation Template:
Relational ethics of care:



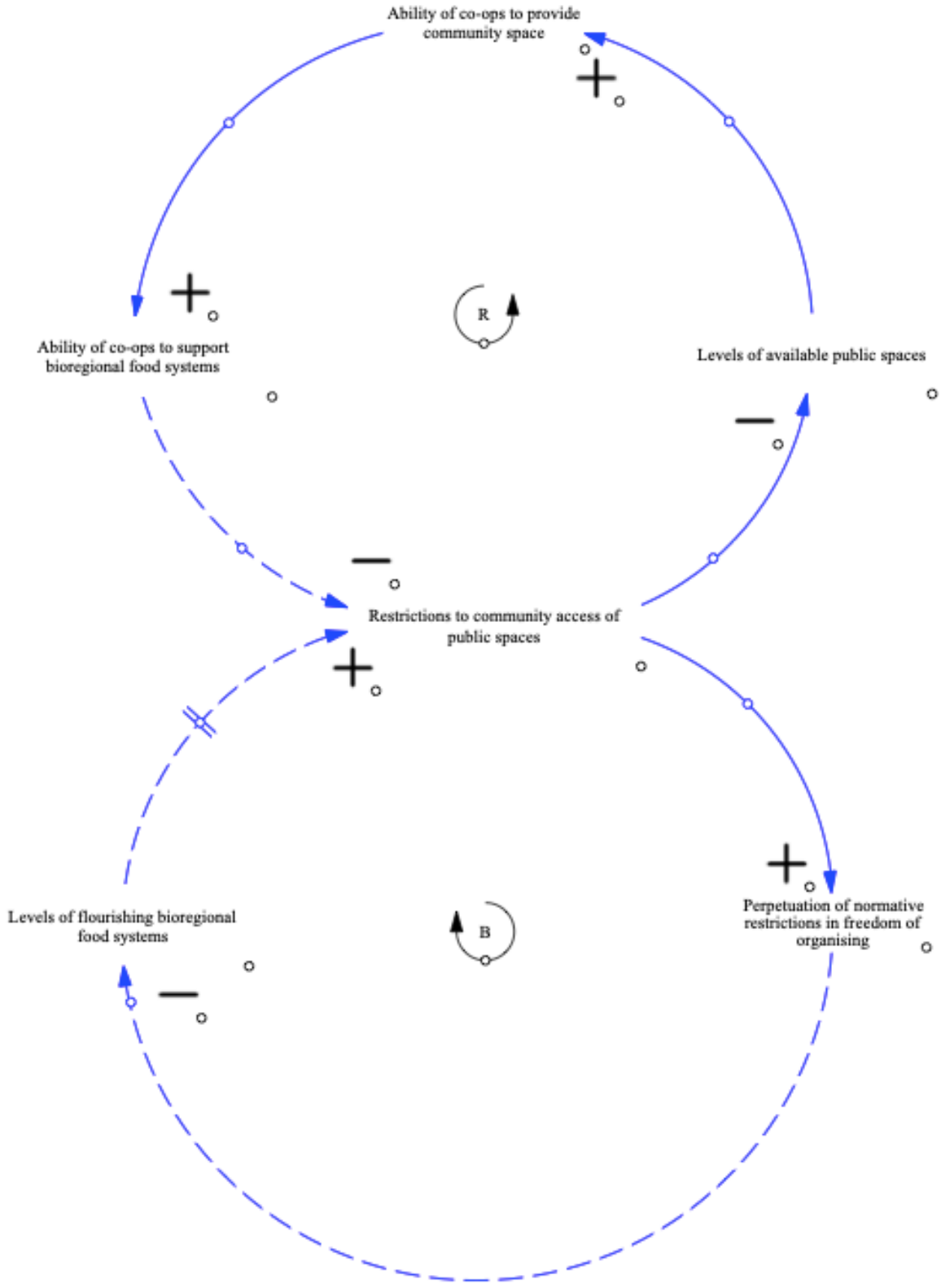
Cultural Adaptation Template:
Volunteering and the food system:



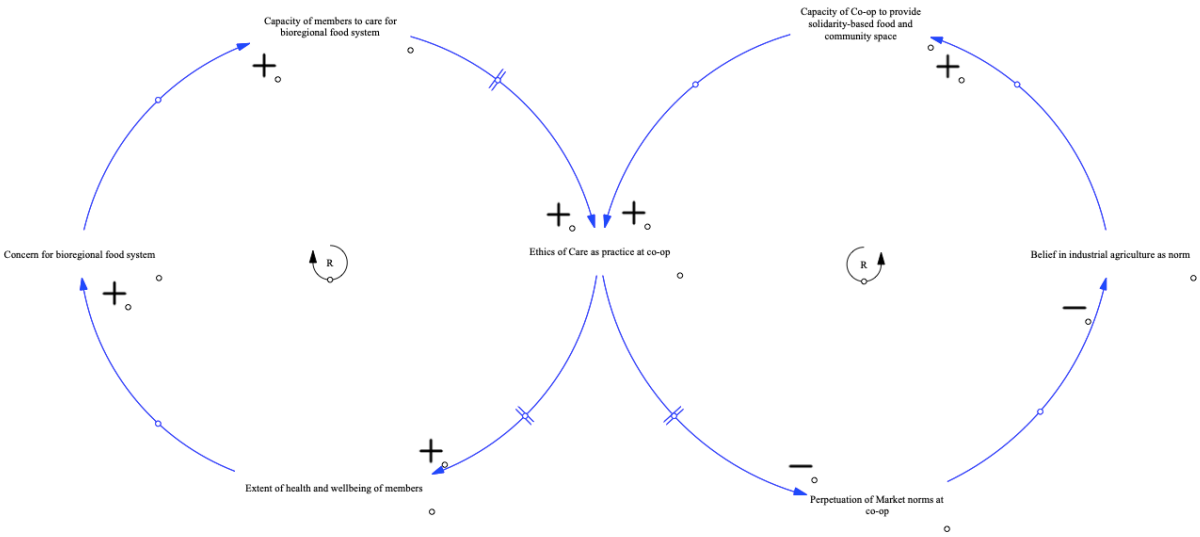
Cultural Adaptation Template:
Volunteering and food procurement:



Fixes that fail systems archetype:
Public space and co-ops:



Success to the Successful systems archetype:
Relational ethics of Care:



Appendix E

A Food Co-op History

The food co-op evolved at the Australian National University (ANU) in the Seventies, an era of bourgeoning social and ecological consciousness (Altman, 1987; Bookchin, 1980; Boyden, 1987, 2016b; Carson, 1962; Ganz, 2000; Singer, 1975). As well as looking for new ways of living in harmony within ecology, the co-op was a pragmatic means to an end for just a handful of progressive ANU students who wanted cheap, nutritious vegetarian food on campus. That co-operative buying venture was initially called the ANU Nutrition Society, and the consumer co-op grew over time to become a physical space, housed in several different buildings centrally situated on the ANU campus. The co-op is presently a large shopfront, selling as cheaply as possible, and as locally sourced as possible, vegetarian, sustainable and ethical dried bulk goods and organic fresh produce. As well as being a popular cheap organic vegetarian lunchtime café, it offers a sizable social space to many different community groups. Since the advent of computer use for co-op registration, which came about only a decade ago, there have been 3750 new memberships recorded. The computer system does not hold record of how many of those memberships are current. The co-op remains an alternate, not-for-profit economy and participatory democracy using the original seven Rochdale Principles for cooperatives - Voluntary and open membership; Democratic member control; Member economic participation; Autonomy and independence; Education and training; Cooperation among cooperatives; and Concern for community (ICA, 2024). The co-op has a constitution, code of conduct, manifesto and solidarity action plan, as well as many strategies, policies and at any given time, working groups. At the AGM each year the working members elect a new board of directors comprised of co-op members. Working members make the decisions, keep things running, and volunteering is encouraged, with a higher discount also offered for those with up-to-date volunteer hours, as well as remuneration for some of the essential volunteer roles via an internal credit system. For the last ten years or so the co-op has started to pay some Australian dollar wages - to the manager and lunchtime cooks - predominantly women who have arrived in Australia on refugee visas.

I have been involved with, and a lover of the co-op since 1998. At that time the co-op existed as one of a number of organisations forming an extended community of groups, all housed in a series of crumbling buildings and squats on the periphery of campus at what was called ‘the rocks’ on Kingsley Street. The demolition of this site, and the disparate rehousing of those organisations, meant the dissolution of some of the connections between those groups that only neighbourly physical proximity can bring (Khorana, 2018). The Conservation Council ACT Region and the Canberra Dance Theatre are the only groups that are still housed together, in the co-op’s current Kingsley Street location. I was made aware first of the co-op through attending meetings next-door at the Canberra Environment Centre - which has recently moved off campus, though not without protest. Networks of friends involved in environmental campaigning back then did their shopping at the co-op, and it made sense to me for systemic reasons (Wilkes, 2022) to start to do so too, particularly as a long-term vegetarian. My instinctual initial feeling of vague distaste - that the co-op wasn’t really a nice or proper place to procure food, because it didn’t seem like the supermarkets that I was used to - was overcome by this sense of doing something for the greater good. The co-op was as my education and still seems to me to serve primarily as a means of practical collective learning -

teaching people, especially young people, about food justice, earth systems, composting, recycling, the circular economy and sharing. And through being in community and in relationship, about ourselves – because we only really learn about ourselves through relationship (Levkoe, 2006).

Over the years the co-op battled for its survival on campus and after many discussions with the ANU about commercial rental arrangements, managed to land in its current comparatively spacious and airy modern building. It has become through necessity, and through the efforts of whomsoever was around, clean, hygienic and a recognised bulkfoods provider in the wider Canberra community. The big space with some new overheads to meet and a manager who wanted to create a music venue, begat the addition of 'acoustic soup' fundraiser evenings, which continue to run monthly. The creation of conditions allowing for music gatherings, including an alcohol license, meant that other community groups could start using the space and equipment for various fundraisers, events and parties (the co-op will see its first use as wedding venue later this year). Around a decade ago, the co-op added the permanent café and hot lunches, sometimes breakfasts, which is a similar model to the long-established Friends of the Earth café and co-op in Collingwood, Melbourne. The co-op is now also a point for the distribution of foods outside of or on the peripheries of the monetary system. There is a no-questions-asked suspended meal program – whereby customers can purchase a meal in advance so that another customer at another time can claim it when in need and without money - an ANU free student meal program, pickups of daily baked local sourdough breads for free distribution, and the Canberra Food Not Bombs chapter utilise the co-op kitchen to cook up their collected foods for external meal distribution (Boarder-Giles, 2021).

I became a regular co-op shop coordinator in 2005, with stints in the kitchen, café and on the board as well. The coordinating roles receive remuneration of internal credits (which used to be as paper vouchers, but now an online system), which enables me to do all my food procurement there. Campaign groups that I am involved with regularly use the co-op space as a venue for gatherings - so all in all the co-op has become over time a physical hub for me, and for many, many others. Some of the co-op's first members are still members. There is mild dispute over the exact year of inception - some citing 1973, others 1976 - but regardless, a coffee table book commemorating fifty years of the food co-op is in the making for its anniversary – making the co-op one of Australia's longest running food co-operatives. Earlier this year Alfalfa House, another long running food co-op in central Sydney closed its doors due to financial difficulties. Food cooperatives forming central roles in food systems of different societies overseas, for example Cuba (Funes et al, 2002); and Spain (Nelson & Edwards, 2020), significantly differ to the food co-op model here in Australia, so it is difficult to make direct comparisons - in regards to success, numbers, and working models (ICA, 2024). In Australia food co-ops often hold spaces within university campuses (Local Harvest, 2024) and are usually members of the Australian Federation of Co-ops (The Co-op Federation, 2024), itself a member of the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA, 2024).

Many participants of the interviews undertaken in this study wonder how the Canberra Food Co-op will financially manage long-term, and there is always this undercurrent of insecurity present at the co-op. They also wonder, in the light of widespread societal concern after the recent Australian inquiry into supermarket price gouging (ACCC, 2024), not only why consumer aspects of the food

system are not better regulated, but also why solidarity-based food networks are not better supported in Australia (see discussion chapter). During the lockdown periods of covid restrictions, the government not only financially supported the co-op as a provider of essential services, but also seriously considered using the co-op online home delivery service as an extra avenue of provision, as the supermarkets were finding it difficult to deliver food in a timely manner (personal communication).

The co-op is a good working model of the kind of values-led, biosensitive food network that challenges the hegemony of the conventional system. Solidarity-based food co-ops are one way that bioregional food networks in societies such as Australia supply urban avenues for ethical biosensitive food procurement while forming relationships with local farmers - and go about changing the food system in wealthier consumer societies. Members alleviate their concerns about supporting inequitable long supply chains which affect so many distant invisible people and landscapes along so many links (Christensen, 2015), by making food procurement choices which avoid the supermarkets. Unpublished data suggests that while these values-led or solidarity-based food networks make up only one percent of the Australian food market, up to fifty percent of Australian consumers share similar values around ethics and sustainability, pointing to wider and as yet unmet desire for change (Wilkes, 2022). Meanwhile, the small enclaves which currently do provide solidarity-based foods exist could be seen as golden ghettoes (Moyer, 2013), feasible and permissible market exit solutions contained within a market dictated paradigm, comfortable but not doing anything much to combat planetary collapse. The food co-op is not comfortably numb to the values that underpin its operations, and the working members involved in this study take the co-op's success and potential impacts seriously. They are invested and interested in the broader environmental and societal issues inherent to becoming practically involved in a values-led food network. Boarder-Giles (2021), chronicling the work of Food Not Bombs, strongly asserts Gibson-Graham's idea that diverse economies exist in messy growing tandem with capitalist economies, adding that Food Not Bombs chapters are instances of insurrectionary rhizomatic dispersals.