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Research Article

Alternative framings of alternative food: A typology of practice

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Abstract: 'Alternative' food initiatives (AFIs) are often interpreted as political movements, constructed as defiant alternatives to industrial agri-food relations, and represented by a performance of singular alterity. This understanding of alternative collapses into a mere politics of identity, criticised in the literature for its oversimplification. In this paper, we utilise an established methodological framework that retains AFI diversity, to create a novel typology of AFIs by diverse and embodied practice rather than animating political project. In doing so, we point to the political potential for AFIs to 'do' food otherwise and make different worlds.

Key words: alterity, alternative food initiative (AFI), 'doing' differently, typology.

Moving away from a normative alternative

Food production in New Zealand is rarely discussed in terms of non-industrial agriculture. New Zealand's food industry and relationality within a globalised, conventional food system is a dominant focus in the literature. Research into practices and performances of New Zealand's alternative food is meagre and often does not recognise the full range of political, ethical, and practical difference encompassed in alternative food movements and initiatives. 'Alternative' food initiatives (AFIs) are described as antagonistic to the dominant food system, related to a particular type of political movement, and then too often represented in terms of the performance of a singular notion of alterity. As a consequence, critiques of 'alternativeness' in food may miss the potential that thinking and doing otherwise might have for making different worlds, individually and collectively; a potential that Gibson-Graham and associates (e.g., Gibson-Graham & Roelvink 2010) describe as 'a geography of hope' and Carolan describes as 'difference power' (Carolan 2013b).

Politics of food is informed by practices and embodied experiences, and the two have been suggested to articulate inextricably (e.g., Carolan 2011; Larder *et al*. 2014). AFIs' diverse practices are interesting on their own merit, but to disrupt dominant ways of thinking it is helpful to consider the actual, observable practices of a more socially embedded food movement. Holloway *et al*. (2007) offer a methodological framework for collecting diverse data on AFIs, and they use these data to explore production–consumption relationships. We use Holloway *et al*.'s framework to explore Auckland's AFI foodscape and consider this learning in terms of their difference in practice rather than their politics.

We therefore address the gaps in research on AFIs in three ways. First, we offer an entry point to investigate New Zealand AFI case

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studies, which are lacking in the international AFI literature. Secondly and more critically, we reveal practices of AFIs, which are rarely discussed in the AFI literature. And lastly, we utilise the data gathered from an established methodological framework to construct a novel understanding of AFI 'doings' in a new heuristic – of typology of practice rather than the normative politics of alternativeness. As Carolan (2013a,b) describes, a productive approach is to disregard concepts of 'more' or 'less' (for example, consumption, or politics, or economic profit) and instead converse in terms of 'difference'.

We acknowledge that a typology can be problematic; however, it is useful to consider classifying frameworks in order to compare and contrast them with conventional systems and contemplate their inter- and intra-relationality. Categorisations of AFI practice demonstrate different, nonetheless tangible, connections to food. The proposed classification of AFIs in Auckland by practice instead of viewing them reductively as 'alternative', gives credence to a framing of plurality in the foodscape.

Foodscapes of 'alternativeness' – learning to think and do otherwise

As reviewed below, contemporary literature from the United States (US), Canada, United Kingdom (UK), and more recently Australia, describes socially and ethically embedded, local food movements that have emerged in direct response to a hegemonic system. Even these general lobbies do not capture the variety of political motivations of AFIs or the incongruent nature of political projects associated with AFIs, for example, the simultaneous pursuit of human health through industrial organic meat production or vegetarianism, both with differing potential consequences for environmental and animal welfare. Food systems have been relatively understudied in this way, particularly regarding their diversity in practice, their assembling, and their potential typology.

In the global literature, food initiatives that have been classified as 'alternative' are wide ranging. Farmers' markets (FMs) have been investigated extensively. Their renaissance has been documented in North America (Brown 2001; Feagan *et al*. 2004; AMS 2007 cited in Brown & Miller 2008), in the UK (Holloway & Kneafsey 2000; Kneafsey & Ilbery 2001), and in Australia (Coster 2004). It was proposed that FMs are in fact integral to the re-creation of regional and local food systems (Gillespie *et al*. 2007). They have been studied in: the US, e.g., regarding their manifestation as post-industrial entities, their economic impacts, and their links to local economies, respectively (Lyson *et al*. 1995; Brown 2001; Bubinas 2011); Australia, e.g., their competition with other (mostly mainstream) food sources (Gross 2011); the UK, e.g., as novel sites of consumption (Holloway & Kneafsey 2000); and, in overview (e.g., McEachern *et al*. 2010). Subscription farming, e.g., direct farm-to-consumer food boxes, has been examined regarding motivations for its use in the UK and France (Brown *et al*. 2009), and comprehensively in the case study of the Good Food Box scheme in Toronto (Baker 2004; Johnston & Baker 2005). Food cooperatives and their connected social movements have campaigned on mobilising political projects like food sovereignty in developing countries (e.g., Via Campesina[1] (Institute for Food and Development Policy 2000), and more subversive activities of both dumpster diving (Ferrell 2006) in the US, and guerrilla gardening (e.g., Hardman 2011) in the UK. Domestic production (Larder *et al*. 2014) has also been linked to empowerment through, and importance of access to land for, food production. There has been interest internationally in specific AFIs (primarily FMs) to address various political projects, related to food miles (Wallgren 2006), food hygiene (Worsfold *et al*. 2004), food security, and a resilient food system (Allen 2010; Cameron & Gordon 2010; McMichael 2010).

There has been limited investigation into broader motivations for engagement with non-industrial food in New Zealand and for New Zealand produce. These include: food security (e.g., Rosin 2013); food miles (Stadig 1997; Saunders *et al*. 2006); genetic modification (Knight *et al*. 2007; Kurian & Wright 2010); agricultural resilience of rural communities around climate change (Pomeroy & Newell 2011); globalised agro-food systems (Goodman & Watts 1997); social dynamics in sustainable agriculture (Campbell *et al*. 2012), and the per-

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ceived shift from agriculture as an industry or science to a biological economy (Campbell *et al.* 2009). Cross-cultural studies have compared New Zealanders' organic food consumption with several Asian countries' (Squires *et al.* 2001). Pearce *et al.* (2006) have mapped 'food deserts' or access with respect to food security and deprivation with case studies in Christchurch and Wellington, and Freeman and Buck (2003) endeavour to establish mapping techniques to classify entities like food gardens in urban New Zealand. More recently, special issues of both *New Zealand Sociology* (Volume 24, Issue 8, 2013) and *New Zealand Geographer* (Volume 69, Issue 3, 2013) have addressed Antipodean Food Futures and (New Zealand based) Biological Economies, respectively, considering agrifood histories, visions for a more sustainable and just food future, or a more cynical realism. Themes include health, food value, and provenance. Theoretically, conversations are started around embodiment, materiality, and assemblage as contemporary lenses with which to view food.

However, as discussed, few studies from New Zealand to date (relative to the abundance in the US, UK, Canada, and Australia) consider AFIs. In line with international trends, FMs have been the most investigated AFI in New Zealand, particularly their economic and commercial attributes, such as: media interpretation, commercial promotion, and social elevation (Chalmers *et al.* 2009); FMs as small-business models (Guthrie *et al.* 2006); and authenticity (Joseph *et al.* 2013). They have also been examined based on their benefits to social wellbeing, for example, the value of cooperation (Lawson *et al.* 2008). Murphy (2011) looked at general motives and perceptions of AFI participants in New Zealand,[2] and a recent research thesis has considered the potential for an AFI network and advisory, such as a food policy council in Auckland (Durham 2013). Dumpster diving has been investigated in one Auckland example, from a 'consumer identity' perspective (Fernandez *et al.* 2011), and continues to gain attention in the media. Other AFIs explored locally include community gardens and their relationship to health outcomes in Auckland and Wellington (Earle 2011), and gardens and gardening as preserving identity for migrant populations (Li *et al.* 2010).

Despite the impressive international literature, and the growing activity of alternative food practices in Auckland, there is much scope to better document and acknowledge these performances. The studies to date cannot fully consider the full range of political, ethical, and practical plurality that AFIs embody. The following study of Auckland's alternative foodscape depicts novel performances of AFIs, which are then articulated in a new framework to highlight their diversity and a different way of viewing the alternative food space.

Methods of practice

To capture a variety of practices, more than 100 AFIs were identified in Auckland, across a wide range of categories: FMs, community gardens, food boxes, pick-your-own fruit, food-share projects, urban or guerrilla gardeners, foragers (fruit and fish), raw milk collectives and consumers, chicken farmers and beekeeping associations all featured. Individual dumpster divers (not part of a wider collective) were also identified. Twenty-three initiatives (two were umbrella initiatives for nine other community gardens) completed questionnaires with at least one respondent from each category of the AFI listed above. Questionnaires comprised questions from Holloway *et al.*'s (2007, p. 8) Analytical Fields for Describing Food Projects. Where AFIs were not centrally 'coordinated' or where respondent details were limited, information was researched online or through AFI publicity materials.

Holloway *et al.* (2007) fashioned their heuristic to portray the organisation of different case studies of food supply, using several analytical fields: Site of Food Production; Food Production/ Procurement Methods; Supply-Chain; Arena of Exchange; Producer–Consumer Interaction; Motivations for Participation; and Constitution of Individual and Group Identity. This framework is also attractive for depicting practice as it preserves the heterogeneity and mundane characteristics of performances using open-ended fields to collect qualitative data. However, Holloway *et al.*'s (2007) use of the framework 'directs attention to the particular locations of resistance to prevalent power relations in food systems that are made possible through differ-

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ent food projects' and therefore focuses on the political without considering the importance of practice. In our use of Auckland's AFI data gathered using Holloway *et al*.'s framework, we tease out practices and performances from the data, classify observations according to Holloway *et al*.'s fields in terms of their attributes, and employ it in a new typology of practice. This interpretation of AFI case studies gives license to divergent practices and their political meanings, enabling urban food transformation through seeing and doing alternativeness differently.

Though not representative from the collective perspective, our documentation of AFI diversity is representative in its legitimacy of what their practices reveal about them. Other literature shows this approach of looking to atypical cases because of their explanatory power, bringing new things into being (Law & Urry 2004, 396), opening up new possibilities through academic work (Gibson-Graham 2008), and 'crafting rather than capturing realities' (Cameron *et al*. 2011, 493) through novel methods of interpretation and framing.

In this study, AFIs are defined as groups (or individual associates) demonstrating challenges to dominant practices and performances of food provision. A challenge of administering questionnaires to this variety of initiatives was their difference in structure, formality, and the applicability of questions of methods of exchange. With community gardens, for example, no goods are exchanged *per se*, though tacit knowledge and experience both are, and in abundance. Therefore, the significance of the embodiment of this diversity cannot be understated.

The following section outlines and interprets 'doings' and practices that have been extracted from category responses (Tables 1–4) for the 23 Auckland AFI case studies, elicited using fields in Holloway *et al*.'s (2007) methodological framework (as discussed above).

Traversing Auckland's alternative food terrain

Sites of food production (Table 1) varied considerably between AFIs. Of all fields, the most eclectic responses emerged in the variety of locations of food production for exchange. Both public and private land use was reported, on diverse scales, and occasionally, subversively. An urban gardening initiative located activity at 'participants' homes . . . backyards, balconies, berms',[3] and altogether seven different AFIs practice in individuals' backyards in their initiatives' activities. Online research of Auckland's community gardens suggests that practices have extended to front verge vegetable gardening, which have been the subject of contention between Auckland Council and local residents (see Gibson 2014). Other production sites include parks, church grounds, University grounds (two responses), allotments, community centres (five responses from one umbrella community gardening group), and farms (10). A fish parts 'redistribution' project uses harbours and the Hauraki Gulf around Auckland to practice harvesting, to salvage fish heads from recreational catch, which are otherwise filleted and their remains discarded.

Food production methods (Table 1) varied considerably between and within AFI types. While organic (certified or self-certified) food production and distribution practices presented in most initiatives, they were absent from some AFIs responses where it could not be guaranteed. At least one AFI (raw milk producer) sought organic standards under an 'organic philosophy' but under uncertified practice. Consumer participation (embodied food production) was overwhelmingly evident with 17 AFIs reporting this production practice.

AFI *supply-chains* (Table 2) are typically shorter than in conventional food production. Community gardens, pick-your-own, and foragers practice one step in their supply: consumers harvesting the produce. Most other AFIs have two-step processes, where one individual procures food, which is redistributed to a separate consumer, e.g., a market patron, City Mission, or raw milk collective member. By one measure, the longest distribution chain may be the dumpster diver, who relies on the conventional supply-chain to access gleaned foods. The chain length can vary considerably, particularly for imported foods. Alternatively, the dumpster diver could be regarded as having a similarly short supply-chain to the one-step projects, where the food is ripe for the (trash)-picking and allows immediate consumption by the procurer.

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Arenas of exchange (Table 2) and *producer–consumer interactions* (Table 3): Virtual markets and online methods of communication are practised by some AFIs to improve convenience and accessibility for those privileged with online access, and to expand the spatial geography of exposure to products and networks (a 'wider . . . younger audience'). One AFI claimed they sold produce online.

Web-based practices of communication were noted as 'easier cheaper and quicker [than others]', for producer and consumer – important for self-funded or not-for-profit type organisations. Types of online communication practice included email (14), Facebook (3), Trademe (a web-based, second-hand trading site), website or online discussion fora (9). One community garden mentioned that a benefit of connecting (to) initiatives via the Internet was 'accessibility for those who are unable to come to the garden during weekly opening hours', suggesting that some practices of AFIs could be reproduced or taken online. One respondent stated they could 'create an online community'. Typical practices of producer–consumer communication included: newsletters (10), community newspapers (7), and local signage.

Table 1 Sites of food production and food production/ procurement methods

	Site of food production	Food production/procurement methods
Bee keeping group (2)	University grounds/backyards	Farming/consumer participation
Chicken keeper (3)	At home/backyards	Organic/non-caged (but housed)/consumer participation/permaculture
Community gardens (4)	Public land in parks/church grounds/University grounds/allotments/bee hives/community gardens (3)/community garden (1)/enviro-centre (1)/organic home garden/teaching garden (1)	Organic/consumer participation
Dumpster diver (1)	Car parks	Consumer participation
Farmers' market (3)	Lifestyle blocks/farms	Conventional farms/orchards/organic/consumer participation/permaculture
Food box (1)	Farms/occasionally community gardens/allotments/backyards	Conventional farms/orchards/organic
Food share (2)	Lifestyle properties/organic farms/back gardens	Conventional farms/orchards/organic/consumer participation, permaculture/food swap
Foraging/Gleaning group (2)	Backyards/orchards/the sea	Foraged/conventional farms/orchards/public and backyard fruit trees/neglected orchards/the sea/consumer participation
Pick-your-own (1)	Farms	Conventional farming/orchards/consumer participation
Raw milk collectives/ Producers (3)	Farms	Uncertified organic/conventional farms
Urban/Guerrilla gardening (1)	Urban centre/participants' homes – backyards/balconies/berms	Consumer participation/gifting

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Table 2 Supply-chain and arena of exchange

	Supply-chain	Arena of exchange
Bee keeping group (2)	Harvesting→direct selling. ~ 70% to members/ ~ 30% to scouts/seasonal show	Direct selling at fixed venues
Chicken keeper (3)	Direct sell from home (production site). ~40% to family and friends/ ~ 60% for home	Direct selling/exchange with friends/family/neighbours/gift
Community gardens (4)	Garden→consumer. ~ 5% to market/remainder distributed between growers	Direct selling at fixed venues Collaborative growing/ consumption
Dumpster diver (1)	Producer→supermarket/produce store waste bin→dumpster divers. ~ 15–20% of fresh produce discarded.	Supermarkets
Farmers' market (3)	Most = Producer/vendor→consumer. Exceptions = Producer/vendor buys raw materials→sells value-added product to market patron. Some suppliers hire middlemen to transport/sell goods.	Direct selling at fixed venues (markets)
Food box (1)	Grower→Food box hub→Household ~95% home delivered/ ~ 5% workplace delivered.	Direct selling online/ membership scheme
Food share (2)	Food harvested→consumer	Fortnightly meeting (summer) for swap and sale
Foraging/Gleaning group (2)	Backyard fruit trees→picked by volunteers→volunteer delivers to recipient. Fishers catch fish→keep fillets/distribute frames	Collaborative harvesting/ consumption/ online coordination
Pick-your-own (1)	Patrons pick fruit direct from site. ~40% orchard sales/10% farmers' market/ ~ 20% food boxes/ ~ 30% stores	Direct selling at fixed venues/through other vendors
Raw milk collectives/ Producers (3)	Milk produced on farm→collected by our collective on a Sunday morning and driven back [home]→collected by each member from the driving member's house.	Direct selling at fixed venue (farm)
Urban/Guerrilla gardening (1)	Raise seedlings→growers sign-up online/receive seeds/seedlings→growers harvest→bring to central point→patrons buy/consume	Collaborative growing/ consumption

Motivations for participation (Table 3) highlighted some well-versed political aspirations common to AFIs researched overseas, but also identified some more novel provocations. Participant motivations ranged through political, socio-cultural, economic, and ecological reasons. Critically though, responses identified performances of AFIs that practitioners and participants felt represented their motivations, as explored below.

One AFI noted management of surplus produce through exchange with another AFI. Four AFIs discussed practices as motivated by business success or combining personal interests with local demand for AFI produce. Other economic motivation concerned value, e.g., practices of accessing inexpensive but high-quality, nutritious, local/organic produce. Patrons practising investment into AFIs through their active patronage were idealised by several AFIs, and two AFIs noted motivations of contributing financially to local community projects.

Ecologically, there was awareness of organic production practice (four responses), and the perceived environmental and health benefits of

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Table 3 Producer–consumer interaction and motivations for participation

	Producer-consumer interaction	Motivations for participation
Bee keeping group (2)	Email/newsletters/field days	Learning/educating about bees
Chicken keeper (3)	Word-of-mouth/Trade me/sell at work	Keeping chickens as a hobby/selling surplus eggs
Community gardens (4)	Email/newsletter/community newspapers/email/online fora/workshops	Creating gardening space for those without any or enough/ 'community'/growing inexpensive organic food/wanting to feed families well/ enjoyment/providing learning/teaching space/food security and self-reliance/connecting food and health
Dumpster diver (1)	Online fora	Addressing social/environmental concerns/awareness of uneconomical and unethical practices considering food insecurity in some Auckland communities
Farmers' market (3)	Email/newsletters/community newspapers/online fora /annual postcard/local signage	Community. Sustainability: reducing waste/transport costs/links/overheads/profit dilution, expense of organic/food related health risks. Addresses: independence from industrial food/animal ethics/local food and support
Food box (1)	Email/newsletters/online fora	Making local/artisan food affordable/convenient
Food share (2)	Email	Sharing growing/preparing/meeting friends/sharing surplus
Foraging/Gleaning group (2)	Email/community newspapers/Facebook/website, newspapers/magazine	Facilitating fruit sharing (from backyards/orchards) with those needing and not having/educating about and reducing fish catch by utilising entire fish/reducing waste/offering high value and nutritional meal for free/creating connections
Pick-your-own (1)	Email/telephone	Business success/providing quality healthy fruit using good environmental practice/making fruit accessible/offering people fun of participating in harvesting
Raw milk collectives/ Producers (3)	Email/online fora/word-of-mouth/text messages/phone calls	Enjoyment of working with animals/benefits of raw milk/ wanting to feed families well/capitalise on demand/reducing waste to landfill (no plastic bottles)/making quality cheese/saving money and time through collective
Urban/Guerrilla gardening (1)	Email/newsletters/online fora /workshops/stalls at events/social media	Educating about sustainable urban living

AFIs rather than industrial practices to produce these foods as well as raw milk (three responses) and fresh eggs (two responses). Raw milk and fish heads were associated as being dietetically 'better' or containing 'high nutrition'. Practices intended for conservation (of fish stocks), and ecological 'sustainability' messages were reported by seven respondents. A raw milk producer reported practices of reducing plastic waste when buying in bulk.

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Five AFIs also reduced waste by practising food redistribution of otherwise unwanted food, with foragers concerned for 'those who need and don't have', considering the 'food shortages amongst Auckland's underprivileged/transient community'. Community gardens practice 'making space available for people who perhaps don't have land at home, or need more'. In this way AFIs appeared to be reacting against impediments to food democracy and food security/self-reliance in food procurement – this was alluded to or discussed by four initiatives. Practices that 'make local and artisan food as affordable and convenient as industrial food' was raised by one AFI, but implied by several.

Socio-culturally, three AFIs (community gardens) mentioned enjoyment of AFI activities. Performances in teaching/learning or food production skills-sharing were motivations (13 respondents), with one AFI projecting opportunities for practical volunteer leadership and personally uplifting experiences in practice. Performances of communities of care are evident through a community garden's mission 'to be a space in the community to come and learn with a hands on approach' and cultivate 'a community feeling for loners'. Other AFIs also offer a space for retired people and mothers and 'a place for community'. Table 3 identifies a wide diversity of participants practising inclusivity in these spaces.

These factors help build *individual and group identities* (Table 4) in AFIs, through embodied participation in these diverse initiatives. Some more structured AFIs are represented by a club or committee, board and/or trustees, contractors (in one case, a market manager), and engaged stall-holders and home growers. Most groups engaged volunteers, which emphasises that key motivations for participation are not necessarily monetary. Groups advocated inclusivity, suggesting that 'anyone' with an interest/desire/wish/care to learn/participate/share was welcome. This suggests that group identities built on philosophical as well as performative likenesses between members may be common. However, some literature shows that work to be done by AFIs and the practices of participants are changeable depending on dynamic and constantly reforming associations of the individual, and the AFI assemblage (Sharp 2015).

Table 4 Constitution of individual and group identities

	Constitution of individual and group identities
Bee keeping group (2)	Club and committee/public/youth groups
Chicken keeper (3)	Myself/family and friends/public/breeder of chickens/feed producers/urban Aucklanders
Community gardens(4)	Volunteers/mothers/retired folk/local people seeking 'community'/schools/learners of gardening/immigrants/Asians/Māori /Pakeha/young/old
Dumpster diver (1)	Those challenging industrial food waste/less well off and needing food
Farmers' market (3)	Committee/trustees/volunteers/contractors(market manager)/stall holders/home growers/local community/community board/women's groups/ethnic groups/patrons
Food box (1)	Households concerned about supporting local/natural food
Food share (2)	Those wanting companionship/sharing of excess produce. Members of club and committee
Foraging/Gleaning group (2)	Volunteers. Those having/wanting fish or free fruit
Pick-your-own (1)	Public patrons/farmer
Raw milk collectives/ Producers (3)	Supporters of raw milk/collective members
Urban/ Guerrilla gardening (1)	Auckland residents

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Creating a typology of AFIs, their actors and their actions

This typology uses an understanding of AFI 'doings' in a novel framework, of typology of practice rather than a normative politics of alterity. There is a risk in using a typology to understand urban AFIs differently, given it creates other boundaries and closes down our understandings of the more lively possibilities of AFI practices. However, we apply it here as a heuristic, to juxtapose AFIs against conventional systems and understandings and crucially, to recognise their plurality between and within initiatives and practices.

Practices of these initiatives can be viewed within three classifications of AFI practice (Fig. 1), demonstrating practical and varied connections to our food. The categories established here, of *facilitating access*, *producing*, and *procuring*, emerged from the data as key 'doings' of the initiatives. Classifications are deliberately voiced in present continuous tense, to elicit the mode of doing, that it is active and dynamic, dependent on participation within initiatives, with potential for transforming individuals, and initiatives between them.

Facilitating access is the part played by initiatives that encourage experiential learning in participation in their initiative, and are argued to have more enduring or transformational impacts on participants. By 'facilitating', the AFI performs a role (often via non-profit social enterprise or informal collective), to enable alternative food activity and create connections for information or produce sharing. Some of the individual AFIs achieve this as a consequence of their scheme and marketing methods, for example virtual social media used by a number of initiatives that incidentally encourages information sharing about produce or how it can be used in home cooking. Other initiatives undertake this effort explicitly, such as in the case of urban or community gardening initiatives where they actively provide a space for performances of learning to grow and harvest and then consume the fruit of their labour. Consumption of the produce, however, is not the end goal for the initiatives' coordinators, but rather the goal is to enable other participants to learn and share. 'Facilitating access' arguably wields more contemporary influence given that, for decades, self-sufficient urban food production or procurement has been challenging for practitioners. Therefore, new avenues that enable individual and group

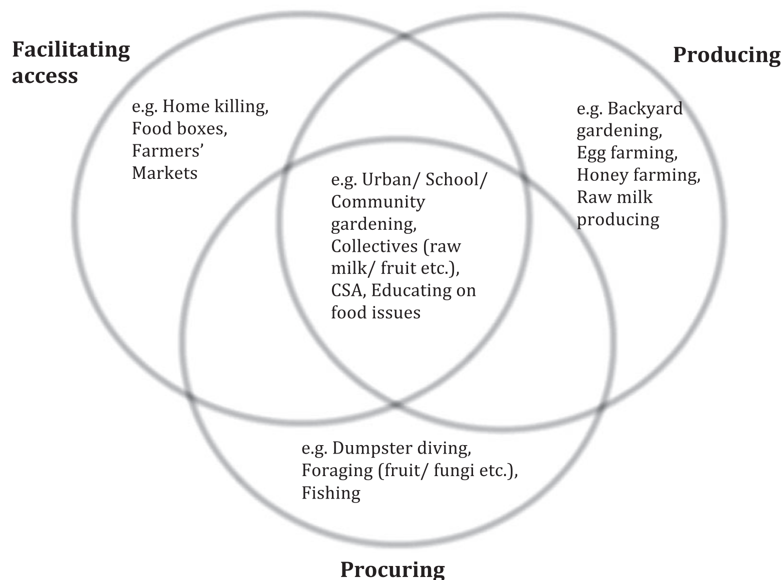

Figure 1 Typology of alternative food initiatives.

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performances of urban food have great transformational potential.

Producing is the act of growing and tending food production for one's own and others' consumption, upon achieving access to a means of doing so. AFIs include backyard gardening, animal husbandry for meat or milk or eggs, and honey production through bee husbandry. Pick-your-own initiatives also fit into this category. 'Production' was perhaps traditionally synonymous with embodied food practice, but appears now to be just one active component of provisioning. There is notably significant intervention in food production, even in AFIs, through more intensive food processing, assembly, and animal domestication practices. But philosophies (such as organic, free range, or raw) and particularly methods of production (such as consumer participation) that are prevalent in these practices are recognised here as performances of difference from most industrial food production, as well as varying between initiatives.

Procuring is the act of initiatives performing as conduits to move produce to the consumer, and examples could be dumpster diving, foraging (gathering shellfish, mushrooms, fruit), fishing, hunting. This category poses a potentially more accessible type of food practice due to typical affordability, physical accessibility to, and traditional knowledges of food procuring; however, practices have waned in more modern times, with loss of generational knowledge around these activities and also access to spaces on which to procure. Again, a reliance on access to these knowledges and sites is critical for their practice. Three examples of AFIs that perform all categories are community gardening, collectives (e.g., raw milk), and urban fruit harvesting, which embody the facilitation of food production through education and guidance about their practice, including workshops and coordinating groups, the production of food, and the distribution or procurement of food by those involved.

Conclusion

Recognising plurality in AFI performances is important. This paper dispenses with a singular notion of alterity to encompass both the diversity of activity and the potential divergent political meanings of their performance. Our proposed heuristic framework shifts our gaze from a singular political framing to an alternative framing of practice. It offers an unfolding of the political potential of practising food otherwise, revealing performances that engender a more democratic, self-reliant, and secure food future. This typology views the case study initiatives within overlapping domains of *facilitating access*, *producing*, and *procuring*. It allows an appreciation of both physical and virtual spaces of activity as valid arenas of exchange and places of producer–consumer interaction, providing opportunities for teaching and learning, information exchange, networking of large-scale groups, and participation. This new heuristic is seen to complement existing models – as another way to view alternative food, demonstrating the relationality and liveliness of AFIs depending on their association, so that we can recognise and value them for their practices of difference instead of their politics.

Endnotes

1 Via Campesina is a producer, and a political organisation focussed on challenging global regulating bodies, e.g., World Trade Organization (WTO). Via Campesina first coined the phrase 'food sovereignty'.
2 Two of the AFIs included in this study, both FMs, were located in Auckland.
3 Known variously in existing literature as grass verges/nature strips.

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