

UC Berkeley

UC Berkeley Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

Have Your City and Eat It Too: Los Angeles and the Urban Food Renaissance

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4gv8w93g>

Author

Tarr, Alexander Robert

Publication Date

2015

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

Have Your City and Eat It Too: Los Angeles and the Urban Food Renaissance

By

Alexander Robert Tarr

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Geography

and the Designated Emphasis

in

Global Metropolitan Studies

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Richard A Walker, Chair

Professor Paul Duguid

Professor Paul E Groth

Professor Carolyn Finney

Spring 2015

Abstract

Have Your City and Eat It Too: Los Angeles and the Urban Food Renaissance

By

Alexander Robert Tarr

Doctor of Philosophy in Geography

Designated Emphasis in Global Metropolitan Studies

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Richard A Walker, Chair

Time and time again, the residents of Los Angeles have used the promises of the “garden city” and urban agriculture to imagine a way out of the persistent problems of urban life. In the contemporary moment, alternative food system activists are again working to create a cultural movement committed to “slow,” local and small-scale community-based urban food systems – which, paradoxically, they are organizing through sophisticated digital tools and global social media. This study argues that, beyond debates over urban diets, food is a lens through which post-industrial imaginaries of an egalitarian digital society are fused with pre-industrial imaginaries of utopian, agrarian communities. The consequence of these entangled visions is a unique set of practices that attempt to inject a sense of radical possibility into an urban geography that is itself the result of decades of struggle over land use, livelihoods, and urban culture. Drawing on a combination of archival research, ethnography, interviews and a survey, this dissertation examines how planners, boosters, government officials, and ordinary citizens have sought to wield food and agriculture in the city as a force to ameliorate the economic, social and ecological alienation that can dominate urban life. This study shows that the political, class and racial underpinnings of urban food movements are far more complex and contingent than normally understood, and the case of Los Angeles reveals both deeply conservative, reactionary moments and unprecedented coalitions emerging to make claims on the right to self determination, health and progressive social change in the city.

For Beecher

Table of Contents

List of Figures, Tables and Maps:	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
INTRODUCTION: IF I WAS IN LA	1
FROM STOMACH AND FROM FANCY.....	1
LINES IN THE DIRT: THE PRAXIS OF THE FOOD RENAISSANCE.....	5
SITUATING LOS ANGELES.....	11
THE KERNELS OF THE STUDY.....	14
CHAPTER 1: FROM HOG FARMS TO HOLLYWOOD	16
EDEN EVERYWHERE.....	19
ORDINANCE 36487: THE HOME GARDEN COMMITTEE.....	23
THE SMALL FARM HOME.....	27
“WE ARE ONLY HERE FOR LOVE, PEACE, HAPPINESS, AND A LITTLE FOOD IN THESE DISTRESSIN’ TIMES”: THE COOPERATIVE EXCHANGE MOVEMENT IN LOS ANGELES.....	33
PARADISE LOST?.....	41
CHAPTER 2: WELCOME TO THE NEW GARDEN CITY	47
LOS ANGELES AS THE NEW GARDEN CITY.....	50
PUTTING THE URBAN IN “URBAN FOOD”.....	53
GARDEN, FARM AND FOOD PROJECTS FOR THE SAKE OF FUN AND “COMMUNITY”.....	56
<i>Masters of the Garden</i>	57
<i>Green Grounds</i>	59
<i>(Sub)urban Farming</i>	61
IT ALL GROWS TOGETHER IN L.A.	65
FROM PEASANT TO PROLETARIAT AND BACK AGAIN?	67
CHAPTER 3: THE SOUTHERN (CALIFORNIA) QUESTION	71
AN INCITING INCIDENT: THE SOUTH CENTRAL FARM.....	71
ACCIDENTAL ANARCHISM.....	74
“NOTHING MAKES YOU A LIBERTARIAN FASTER THAN TRYING TO GROW FOOD IN LA.”.....	75
POLITICS AS UNUSUAL: THE LOS ANGELES FOOD POLICY COUNCIL.....	82
POLITICS AS USUAL: NO MORE FOOD FIGHTS?.....	92
CHAPTER 4: THE GARDEN IN THE MACHINE	95
DOWN ON THE SERVER FARM: CONTRADICTIONS IN THE WEB AND FOOD MOVEMENTS.....	95
<i>The Urban Food Digital Nexus</i>	98
<i>Cities in Networks and Networks in Cities</i>	100
URBAN AGRICULTURE AND SOCIAL MEDIA AS SITUATED PRACTICE.....	104
<i>Situated Communities of Practice</i>	104
<i>An Urban Gardening Geography</i>	106
FROM COUNTERCULTURE TO CYBERCULTURE – AND BACK AGAIN.....	110
<i>Good Grief</i>	113
<i>Green Grounds Goes Global</i>	115
IN CONCLUSION: GARDEN CITY 2.0?.....	117
CONCLUSION:	120
WORKS CITED	123

List of Figures, Tables and Maps:

FIGURE 1: LAND USE DISTRIBUTION CHART (1939)	20
FIGURE 2: TOTAL FARMS IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY 1900-1950	22
FIGURE 3: ACRES OF VEGETABLES, LA COUNTY 1925-1950.....	22
FIGURE 4: SUGGESTED GENERAL LAYOUT OF A HALF ACRE SMALL FARM HOME	28
FIGURE 5: PREDICTED LAND USE TRENDS (1941).....	43
FIGURE 6: GOOD FOOD POLICY COUNCIL GRAPHIC	84

TABLES

TABLE 1: ACRES IN PRODUCTION BY CROP, 1915	21
---	-----------

MAPS

MAP 1: FOOD NETWORK SURVEY.....	107
--	------------

Acknowledgements

I must of course begin with a deep and sincere thank you to my dissertation chair Richard Walker, who showed me how to love cities, be unapologetic about my politics, and how to make those commitments the same thing. Paul Groth, without whom I never could have navigated Berkeley, and who has forever changed the way I see the landscape around me; never has the world been more interesting. My outside committee members Carolyn Finney and Paul Duguid have been extraordinarily generous in taking on a lost geographer and helping me find paths through questions far afield from where I first started this project. I am deeply grateful to all of them for their support, kindness and patience as I have pursued far too many passions, internal and external to my research, these past several years.

It has been an exceptional privilege (in all that the word entails) to pursue a PhD at the University of California Berkeley. Seminars, meetings and chance conversations on the balcony with Michael Watts, Gill Hart, Nathan Sayre, Darin Jensen, Jake Kosek, and many other faculty have deepened this project profoundly. The encouragement at various times of Scott Saul, Fred Turner, and the brilliant and overworked Julie Guthman has seen me through those inevitable moments of crippling doubt about my work. My fellow graduate students in the department and Global Metropolitan Studies have given me endless insight, critiques, lent books and most importantly an irreplaceable community to work in. I could write pages more thanking Adam Romero, Alicia Cowart, Greta Marchesi, Mary Whelan, Nathan McClintock, Lindsey Dillon, Erin Collins, Shannon Cram, John Stehlin, Alberto Velazquez, Tripti Bhattacharya, John Elrick, Anthony Fontes, Nicole List, Diana Negrin da Silva, Annie Shattuck, and the kind group at the school of Information, Ashwin Mathew, Rajesh Veeraraghavan, and Elisa Oreglia who invited me into their ranks. Rachel Brahinsky continues to be a remarkable mentor in all things. Katy Guimond and Sarah Knuth have read and commented on more pages of turgid prose than anyone should rightly be asked to. They have encouraged me and this project with such endless kindness and enthusiasm that they ought to be listed as committee members.

In Los Angeles, I will never be able to repay the countless people who shared their lives, work, ideas, homes, favorite eats, and gardening tips with me over the years. Alexa Delwiche, Joseph Shuldiner, Megan Hobza, Garrett Broad, Craig Dietrich, Vanessa Vobis, and Florence Nishida were invaluable guides to the world of the urban food renaissance. Holly Willis, Steve Anderson, Elizabeth Ramsey and everyone at the Institute for Multimedia Literacy kindly provided me an institutional home in LA. Friends, old and new, gave me shelter, kept me fed, and connected to the vibrant world that is LA: Veronica Paredes, Jason Porath, Ted Kupper, and everyone on “the thread,” Jackie Cornejo, Steven Simon, Jessica Cowley, Rosten Woo, Dave Mason and Tanner Osman, Sabrina Bornstein and Patrick Scones,

Eric Ares and Yelena Zeltzer, Sharon Cech, Nate Baird and Lys Mendez, and my oldest friends and eternal home away from home in LA, Danny and Lauren Ahkiam.

This project was made possible with funds from the Berkeley Fellowship, the Dean's normative time fellowship, a generous Bancroft Summer Research Fellowship, and the NEH-Vectors summer fellowship. The archivists at the Bancroft Library, Los Angeles City Archives, Charles E Young Library at UCLA, USC historical collections, LA Unified School District Archives, and librarians at the Los Angeles Public Library patiently unearthed amazing records for this project. Josh Sides kindly invited me participate in the Whitsett Symposium and publish my early findings in *California History*. Darin Jensen and everyone at the Food Atlas gave me reason to finally map my research. Dick Peet, Juan De Lara, Wendy Cheng, and Mike Davis honored me with an intellectual engagement on Los Angeles in the pages of *Human Geography*.

I have joked over the years that I have gone into the family business, writing a dissertation on food, but it has been the greatest thing in the world to have parents and a sister who not only share my interests and provide yet another space to work out ideas, but have also been the most supportive, understanding and encouraging family a student could ask for. This dissertation has been a long time in the making, stretching far beyond the spatio-temporal confines of graduate school, and I would not have made it if not for the love and support of Tali Weinberg, my closest, oldest and dearest friend. She deserves all of the credit for reminding always why I do what I do. I deserve all the credit for the mistakes contained here within.

Introduction: If I was in LA...

“A commodity is, in the first place, an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another. The nature of such wants, whether, for instance, they spring from the stomach or from fancy, makes no difference.”

—Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume 1* (Chapter 1, Section 1)

“The main reason for the remarkable continuous growth of Los Angeles and its surrounding territory is the fact that Karl Marx was wrong. “

—Walter V Woelke, *Sunset Magazine*, 1924

From Stomach and From Fancy

For all of the increasingly complex technological and organizational innovations that enable modern society to carry on, our lives remain fundamentally dependent on food and agriculture. In an era defined by mobile devices, nanosecond financial transactions, and triumphant urbanism, food can easily appear as any one of an endless number of commodities circulating around—produced in one part of the world by anonymous hands, transported and transformed by yet another, and appearing as if transubstantiated onto store shelves to fulfill our nutritional needs and culinary tastes. But, perhaps because it is so basic to life, we tend to understand food as a categorically different kind of commodity than smart phones and shoes. We are constantly looking for ways to place it outside of the relations dictated by a market society. It is easy to imagine that it is more natural for food to emerge from a backyard garden than a processing plant, or to be purchased at a local farmers market than a major chain grocery. That food should be produced and consumed locally feels like *good sense*. And at its most romantic, we can celebrate the many ways that food connects people and communities to each other rather than to the market. In this study, I ask why modern American urbanites are returning to these feelings towards food in a moment when we might otherwise expect what and how people eat to have become the least interesting part of daily life. And why, in the infamously plastic and concrete world of Los Angeles, in the very belly of the capitalist beast, people are hungry for viable alternatives—and not just from the food system.

Just outside of Los Angeles is a small farm named Muir Ranch. It produces a wide variety of seasonal crops, cut flowers, and some fruit. The “ranch” sells most of its produce to families in Los Angeles, though some of it is consumed on site. A century ago, it would have been a fairly typical site at the edge of Pasadena, Los Angeles’s wealthy suburban neighbor to the North. Pasadena was well known for its citrus groves, roses and rows of mansions supported by both. Over time its reputation transformed into being the home of little old ladies with white gardenias in the front yard and fast cars in the garage. But Muir Ranch is hardly a holdover from some bygone agricultural era; the farm is literally cut out of a piece of the

athletic field at Muir High School. As late as the 1960s, a large school garden or small farm was a common feature in Los Angeles area schools. They were the last vestiges of a system established to train the region's agrarian entrepreneurs. But by 2011 when the Pasadena School District agreed to let a gregarious gardener rototill part of their sprawling campus to start a student-focused farm, very few programs of that sort remained.ⁱ

High school students, some volunteers, and one very active instructor do most of the work on the farm; which is really more of a very large garden than an actual ranch. The instruction is not vocational in the sense that farm-schools once were, graduates are more likely to have a container garden in their yard someday than become truck farmers or citrus barons. However, the curriculum goes beyond the common liberal justification of school gardens—it's good for kids to be outside, close to nature, and learning where their food comes from—even though that element is certainly present. Through cooking classes and the community supported agriculture (CSA)ⁱⁱ style food-box program run by the ranch, students are quite explicitly being trained to participate in an imagined new urban economy. Attuned to hip local tastes and business savvy, the student gardeners are ready to join the "creative class" as entrepreneurs, investing their time and labor into (literally) growing a hyper-local economy of sustainable and artisanal products (cf. Donald and Blay-Palmer 2006 on the promise of creative-food economies).

A few of the students at Muir Ranch may be the grandchildren of the little old ladies of Pasadena, but the students out watering plants and packing boxes with fresh greens reflect the ethnic and economic diversity that defines present day Los Angeles. The majority of students are Latino/a and African American, but not exclusively. White, Asian, and students who inhabit the far more mixed ethnic identities common to contemporary Los Angeles, are busy on the farm as well. The students at Muir Ranch revealed an acute sense of where they stood socio-economically in Los Angeles. In informal conversation they clearly articulated why something like a fully functioning garden on their campus was a significant opportunity for something *different* (not necessarily better, but different than the discipline of P.E. anyway) than the routinized life in public school. As one student put it, "Have you ever noticed how school seems a lot like prison? ...this is the only part of school that doesn't suck." Not that the students particularly loved the garden either. They complain of getting dirty, being too hot, bored with repetitive tasks, and confused about what was actually supposed to be happening. But it is better than the "prison-like" conditions at the rest of the school. Students were either outside or in the teaching-kitchen, relatively free to talk with each other, move about the space as they needed, and genuinely encouraged to be creative, solve problems and reflect on how their gardening and food preparation were alternatives to everything they disliked about school and their futures.

The student's comparison to prison is telling. It speaks directly to the utopian dream that so many supporters of urban agriculture and an alternative food system have: that a renaissance in the city's food system will liberate urbanites from the historical-geographically produced forces of poverty, inequality and ecological destruction that have plagued them for two centuries. Put bluntly, living in Los Angeles makes it clear to many people that they live in a society which leaves so

many of its members without the basic means of social reproduction that it can only think to lock them in cages (Gilmore 2007). Against this reality, the renewed urban agrarian imaginary dissolves the binds of race and class and places us all equally as productive (in the most literal sense) members of society. I emphasize *imaginary* here, because the potential of gardens and local food to liberate us from history is as illusory as any utopian project, but they are at the same time real spaces and practices. And they take on significant meaning at a time when the basic promise of a comfortable life is as fleeting today as it has ever been for urban dwellers, and the threat of a violently enforced poverty as real as ever for many more. In this urban milieu, programs like the Muir Ranch—while ostensibly about reworking the food system, giving kids a chance to learn about where their food comes from and maybe about alternative careers in the culinary arts—set the stakes much higher, taking aim at rethinking urban life as a whole.

Meanwhile, back on the ranch, while some students were busy planting flower bulbs to be used for the class's Valentines Day flower sale in the spring, others were getting into vines. Not the biological variety, but the smart phone app Vine® that acts like a video version of Twitter. In short (pun intended), in lieu of 148 characters of text, the students can take six seconds of video of themselves planting chard and immediately send it out to anyone who might care to watch, in the same way Twitter acts as a "micro-blog" for anyone who might be reading. In American cities we are so comfortable with such ubiquitous computing practices, or at least with young people engaging in them, that they hardly warrant a second glance. But this everyday-ness belies a real disjuncture between a space which is committed to a set of practices that are as ancient as human civilization (planting, harvesting, preserving, preparing, tending the soil, playing, flirting, eating) and virtual spaces that exist only for the most bleeding edge digital practices (texting, tweeting, vines, Facebook, and generally cultivating a social media presence). The practices and technologies of these two spaces evoke quite different moments, but in the garden are inseparable. This intertwining, and all of the questions it raises, is at the heart of this study.

At the garden, Vine is silly and fun for the students, they get to perform for the camera and show off what they're doing. It is also a serious and calculated form of promotion for the garden. A constant social media presence gets Muir Ranch and its eccentric leader, Mud Baron, a lot of attention. That attention is translated into the in-kind donations of plants and materials that the garden runs on, paying customers for the CSA, volunteers that make such projects viable, and mass media coverage, which in turn brings more of the rest. Short videos of kids weeding beds of chard are far more than just cute or short-form inspiring documentaries; they provide a critical connection to the growing alternative food movements. In many ways, they *constitute* the movements. In the 21st century, the so-called "digital age," the presence of social media and digital technologies intertwined with the historic practices of urban agriculture make the contemporary moment unique in terms of possibilities for remaking the urban food system and, at the same time, a new twist on a very old story.

Instructors and students alike blend the material space of the garden into the equally real, but virtual spaces of the Internet. The apparent seamlessness of this blending, the question of why it has begun to feel so natural, lies at the heart of this dissertation. That a movement ostensibly dedicated to re-localizing food production free of industrial logics has been able to grow and develop because of the widespread use of digital communications technology presents a paradox—which is none too surprising, for what are capitalist social relations if not paradoxes?

Alternative food movements are grounded by a critique of large corporations like Monsanto and Cargill. They seek to dismantle the logics that allow companies to hide behind the promise of feeding the world cheaply, while baldly pursuing profit, using their immense wealth and power to dictate unecological monocultures, copyright genetic material, impoverish farmers, and poison urbanites with mass produced processed foodstuffs. But in order for this critique to be produced and reproduced across space, activists have relied heavily on the Internet and digital communications technology. In material and political-economic terms there is perhaps no technology less “local” than the Internet. A handful of gigantic telecoms control most of the infrastructure it relies on, shared only by the large nation state bureaucracies that still control corners of the Internet. Smartphones, computers and network infrastructure are all mass-produced under exploitative conditions around the world, relying on underpaid labor, massive extractive industries, and fierce control of intellectual property. So why do the conditions that cause so much consternation vis-à-vis the food system not trouble us as deeply about our digital communications system; how do we reconcile the material and ideological contradictions?

This paradox does not necessarily imply hypocrisy. The point here is not to suggest that food activists would somehow be more authentic if they were to be full on Luddites, eschewing every alienating technology they encountered. Nor is it to suggest that activists are hypocritically misguided in their efforts to change the food system, or that the modern economy is so inescapable as to make any attempts at alternatives a foolish, if not Sisyphean, task from the start. The direction here is rather to raise the question, to ask how food movements keep both sides of the paradox in tension. Which practices are chosen, adapted and reproduced amongst food activist communities? And how do those choices act to reinforce the feeling that a new food system is possible across a wide variety of spaces? How do they obfuscate the limitations of both? As I will discuss at length below, the pre-industrial fantasy of the garden and the post-industrial fantasy of the digital actually share enough in common ideologically, if not materially, to co-produce each other through the practices of alternative food activists.

The challenge before scholars and activists is to distinguish between where the hope placed in the urban food renaissance reflects Liberal fantasies and where it points to radical possibility for remaking the social relations of the city. Urban gardens, CSAs and local food economies appear, on the one hand, as a new twist on the old Liberal precept that unequal access to markets are the underlying causes of urban poverty and inequality, not structural racism, violence and exclusions. The logic follows that given the “opportunity” to grow their own food, and the ability to produce food commodities for exchange in a local economy, the poorest members of

society will lift themselves out of their misery. Inversely, the Liberal garden logic offers the middle and upper classes a chance to escape the emptiness of their lives and return to a more natural, community oriented set of relationships.

Supporters of a local food system imagine it offsetting the natural tendency of competition to drive down wages to below the cost of daily reproduction. More generally, they suggest that the small scale of their community, as they understand it, will allow an escape from the contradictions of capital circulation. On the other hand, the bright light of (neo)Liberal fantasies might blind us to the possibility that there are radical stakes in the same projects. At certain points, the difference between a neoliberal and an anarchist agenda is a thin line (Hayes-Conroy 2008), especially when it comes to asking how urbanites reclaim some semblance of control over their diets, daily lives and spaces. So how do a Liberal and a radical food politics differ in a modern American city? I will return to this question in several ways throughout the dissertation.

Lines in the Dirt: The Praxis of the Food Renaissance

In the face of alienation, class struggle and ecological devastation, urban farms and gardens *seem to* promise to reconnect the urbanite with their labor, defuse economic tensions and restore some sense of ecological balance in the city. Thus, the movement towards an alternative food system is less significant for its impact on the structures of the agro-industrial global networks of food production, than for its significance to redefining how we might consider a “right to the city” (as conceptualized by Harvey 2012; D. Mitchell 2003; Lefebvre 1996) through the lenses of food and agriculture. This dissertation explores why food and agriculture have continued to be such promising sites of urban imagination, political maneuvering and everyday practices, yet never as transformative as we might hope, while still making a new and different kind of city.

Moving on from Muir Ranch, this dissertation is not about school gardens necessarily, though they make an occasional appearance as an important site for physical and ideological investment in alternative food projects. Schools exist as places for building the future while maintaining the existing social order.ⁱⁱⁱ In that sense, the following chapters ask more broadly how alternative food movements imagine a different future by drawing on the past; how they offer the promise of a new urban food system that is simultaneously a radical break from the current arrangements *and* recognizable as compatible with the current social order through a sense of historical continuity. In the spirit of what cultural theorist Stuart Hall has written on extensively in his discussion of Antonio Gramsci’s conceptions of “common sense” and “good sense” (cf. Hall, Morley, and Chen 1996; Hall and O’Shea 2013) what is at stake is the construction of a new common sense around not just the food system, but urban life altogether. “Common sense,” for Hall and Gramsci, appears as coherent and often conservative, but is always being made and remade—it is a site of political struggle (Hall and O’Shea 2013, 4). While the Left is largely critical and intellectually suspicious of common sense, its formation constitutes an ever-important site of investigation.

I draw further here on British cultural studies' insistence on understanding the dynamics between "base" and "superstructure" as "indissoluble processes" (Williams 1977) and subsequent tensions between cultural and social production and reproduction as they relate to the formation of subject's ideology (Willis 1981; Lave et al. 1992). In these frameworks, food plays multiple roles in the production and reproduction of people, social relations and culture. We have an intuitive sense that food is an essential ingredient in the dynamic processes that form the base of a society and deeply important to the continued reproduction of its superstructure. These functions are inseparable, but cannot be conflated. Take for example that most central object of political economy: a loaf of bread. "Our daily bread" feeds the biological and physical needs of a person, it is necessary for their basic reproduction.

Bread also acts as an important marker of social position and cultural taste. We can claim to know a lot about a person who, in the modern US, eats a sandwich of Wonderbread as compared to someone who eats artisanal loaves that can trace which 17th century German monastery first cultivated the yeast used in the bread. The artisanal loaf can be construed as matter of cultural distinction, of taste, and, as food activists would likely suggest, as a better choice. Artisanal bread is construed as an alternative to the industrially produced Wonderbread (Bobrow-Strain 2012). But it is more than a matter of consumer choice; the two loaves actually require completely different sets of economic relations and modes of production. In this example we begin to see that even a seemingly small choice between what kind of bread one eats raises a whole host of broader issues around how the food system is structured. This brings us further away from the school garden to the question of what is really at stake in an *alternative* food system?

One way of approaching this question is to think of *alternative* as a contemporary keyword in both activism and scholarship. The word has become so easily slipped in as an adjective connoting a vaguely edgy but comfortable note of progress, that its significance is hardly given much thought, and the question of "alternative to what?" is left wide open. I argue below that this openness has strategic purposes, but also doubles as a looseness that obfuscates serious shortcomings to the visions and agendas of alternative food movements. In the broadest sense, when activists speak of an alternative food system, they mean an alternative to the agro-industrial food complex that produces the vast majority of food for urban populations. But the alternatives are a tangled mess. They can mean alternatives to chemical and machine intensive forms of agriculture such as organic and biodynamic farming. They can mean alternatives to exploitative labor practices that underlie the relative low cost of most fruits and vegetables and prepared food in the US. They can mean alternatives to the transportation and distribution systems that use billions of gallons of fossil fuels to ship food across the globe. They can mean alternatives to the profit motives that drive agro-industrial corporations to develop genetically modified foods, crush growers and generally seek out and exploit monopoly power across the system. They can mean alternatives to keeping animals pumped full of antibiotics, locked in crowded, filthy enclosures waiting an untimely death. They can mean alternatives to the day-to-day life in cities that keeps us from having the time, space, and knowledge to engage in the ancient rituals of

food production and preparation. Even a fleeting glance at some of the most recent semi-popular literature on alternative food systems suggests often they mean many or all of these alternatives at once (Blay-Palmer 2012; Gumpert 2013; Hauter 2012; S. Miller 2008; Winne 2010). But they all point in the same understated direction—that we need an alternative to Capitalism.

To the chagrin of Left academics and activists, capitalism is rarely “on the table” in a serious way in the alternative food movement (Guthman 2011). Some writers and activists have attempted to address these concerns by reframing alternative food movements in a “food justice” framework (for a general overview c.f. Gottlieb and Joshi 2010; Alkon and Agyerman 2011). The “food justice” framework critiques many of capital’s inherent dimensions, from the tendency towards monopoly to the exploitation of labor, but fails to bring them together into a cohesive understanding of why the food system is inseparable from the overall structures of capitalism. Yet, unifying these varied concerns over the food system is at odds with the most basic unit of capitalist circulation, the commodity. More precisely, food activists share an unease (however poorly articulated) that food appears as a commodity under capitalist relations. It is a strange commodity because its use value is the basic stuff of individual and social reproduction; but in exchange, like all commodities, its value is no different than an iPhone or a pair of shoes (K. Marx 1967; Harvey 1982). For reasons I will explore at length throughout this dissertation, the contradictions and injustice that arise from the commodification of food strikes a nerve in people that there is something unnatural about food being made equivalent with all other commodities. The unease a growing number of people have with their relationship to food as a *strictly commercial* set of relations is beginning to unsettle the common sense (in the Gramscian/Hall sense, see above) of the food system. Alternative movements are drawing on “good sense”—kernels of alternatives to the status quo that exist within the contradictory nature of “common sense”—to propose realizable new relations between producers, consumers, and the very sense that a rigid dichotomy exists between the two at all. Whereas the exchange of other forms of private property (clothes, cars, real estate, wealth in general) can be held as a naturalized function of market relations, the subsumption of food to those logics has never been complete. Food and its production remain a site of intense questioning and reimagining of social relations. It remains to be seen, however, whether that site can be expanded to the much broader terrain of all property relations. That is, whether the seeds of *good sense* can, in fact, give rise to a new, broad *common sense*.

Given the extreme focus of food movement politics on the object of food itself at the expense of broader social relations, the nature of alternative food movements has been fiercely debated by scholars, politicians, and activists themselves (Harris 2009; Morgan 2014). The strongest detractors easily paint food activists as following a movement of fancy. Fleeting, fad driven, the food “movement” is just the latest trend for disaffected middle class kids returning to urban centers and simply in need of their latest markers of distinction (Donald and Blay-Palmer 2006). Through writing in a very different context (late 20th century France), Pierre Bourdieu’s *Distinction* (1984) is the quintessential nuanced version of this critique. In his exhaustive study of middle class values and how the “dominated fraction of

the dominant class” seeks to distinguish itself, Bourdieu draws heavily on food and culinary practices as a major form of differentiation between class fractions. Throughout the dissertation I rely on his work that shows how both conscious and unconscious choices around what foods people like and the practices they engage in to acquire them reveals a great deal about how people understand their own subjective position in relation to the overall social structure. Anthropologist Kate Crehan has also noted important linkages between Bourdieu’s theory and Gramscian notions of common sense for understanding the origins of the taste and affects that give texture to everyday lives (Crehan 2011). For critics of the food movements, the interpretation of what motivates some people to take up alternative practices lies at the heart of criticism, often more so than the effects that such practices have.

By contrast, the strongest supporters of food movements construe alternative food practices as absolute necessity—not only from the heart, but literally from the stomach. Everyone needs to eat and to be “healthy,” ergo the fight for an alternative food system is a fight for a basic human right. McClintock argues that the debate is misdirected, however, because up a false dichotomy between political-economic and cultural dimensions of food movements. He suggests that they can be both, and must necessarily be messy (McClintock 2013). I build from his point to ask again, what precisely do food activists, and foodies more generally, hope to achieve through their production of an alternative food system?

I approach the above question from an intentionally urban perspective because, as I argue throughout, much of what is imagined as an alternative food system emerges from cities and is as much about reimagining the city itself as it is about changing how global systems of production and consumption are structured. As noted above, there are many facets of alternative food movements that span the urban and rural, from the hyper local to global structures. But the food renaissance, as I call it, has uniquely urban dimensions. The *culture* of the food movements, as they are represented in the media, organized via social networks, and understood by many Americans, are decidedly urban. They are preoccupied with the use of urban space, the formation of urban communities, the creation of new urban identities. All of these are of course in relation to broader structures that are not necessarily urban, but also separate from them.

The mythos of the “post-industrial” American city, especially in Los Angeles, has done little to undo the economic, social and ecological alienation that defines so much of the urban experience. At the center of this dissertation is a question of how urbanites develop practices to understand, cope with, and escape these overlapping forms of alienation. Specifically, I explore how city dwellers simultaneously turn to activities like urban gardening (imagined as a pre-industrial, i.e. being before the fall of society to its current state) and online networks (imagined as post-industrial, i.e. as being the dawn of a new, digital age) in search of renewed senses of community. More than an ideological frame, in moments of severe economic crisis, the promise of a local food system has been particularly enticing to urbanites unsure of the future of the city and their place within it.

My research shows that groups from widely different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds are able to declare a collective sense of possibility for

remaking the city through local-food centric spaces. However, this vision comes with very different stakes for disinvested, low-income communities and wealthy, bourgeois enclaves, an all too easily hidden reality of imbalanced access to power along lines of race and class in the city. This uneven geography is further obfuscated when the building of food-justice communities takes place in virtual, online spaces capable of ignoring the material realities and social relations of the urban landscape. I argue that the promise of urban agriculture to assuage the urban condition has been built into the geography of Los Angeles. The infamous sprawling suburban spaces of the city serve as both material and ideological spaces to anchor variations on a “Garden City.” Agriculture, in itself could not, cannot and should not ever be a solution to the problems of urban life, but its role in a critique of those problems and for generating new imaginaries of the city makes it a significant site for politics and research. Visions of collectivized property and enterprises, a right to housing, safe and rewarding work with good wages, often feel like far off radical-socialist dreams in American cities; yet, the right to “healthy and good” food, community owned spaces for gardening and democratic control over the food system are once again making their way into mainstream, even conservative, positions in cities like Los Angeles.

Alternative urban food movements begin to make more sense if we understand them in the broader context of how alienation, in various forms, shapes the day-to-day lives of urbanites. Gardens, preparing and preserving food, and farmers markets all connect urban dwellers back to the products of their labor, their creative capacities, and, in some cases, to each other through something other than the fetish of commodities. In their work lives, few urbanites spend their days and nights producing anything that they can claim as their own, either in terms of owning the physical products of their labor nor in terms of their creative ideas. That energy is almost always dedicated to the production of profit in exchange for wages and salary for some other entity, regardless of whether the laborer is washing dishes or manager at a high-end restaurant. Moreover, wage work tends to isolate labor from its social nature (K. Marx 1967; Ollman 1976). Although someone may work for a large collaborative firm, the end result of their work is not a social product, but the private property of that firm. People—social and creative beings—find themselves spending the majority of their waking hours on activities that isolate them from communities other than that of the work place. Even in the so-called creative industries, like Hollywood, where workers are generally engaged in the collective creative process, in a social form of production, the products of their labor are extracted from their collective process and sold as commodities. Alienation, like all processes in Capitalism, effects people unevenly. Predominantly middle class white homeowners experience alienation in very different ways than working class renters of color than do wealthy corporate executives (Roediger 1999). Still, they all seem to feel that something is missing from their urban life that food might be the remedy to.

The practices of urban agriculture and local food production appear as radical departures from this social reality. In the simple acts of labor of growing

vegetables in their own yard, in collectively building a community oven for baking breads and pizza, cooking for each other, people are able to claim their creative capacity as their own. School gardens become relief from prison-like schools; home canning an escape from deadening paid work; community gardens and farmers markets as sites of reconnection between people who share similar spaces in the city. All of these examples suggest that the food renaissance is not entirely nostalgic, nor solely about reinvigorating some pre-industrial economy. There are certainly food activists who present the renaissance as the coming of a new, local economy, but I argue that the popularity, diversity and widespread nature of these practices belies a deeper, more fundamental appeal than replacing an old boring job with a new creative one. Food and agriculture are serious attempts to escape, or undo, alienation through production.

The collaborative and shared interest in these activities constitutes what Lave and Wenger (1991) call a “community of practice.” Through the learning of the practices of urban agriculture, communities form through a shared ideology that the production of food is the most natural, basic, and human of productive practices. Within the community, the practices of gardening and local food production are understood—in ideological, not material terms—to transcend boundaries of difference between class, race, ethnicity, gender, and geography. Yet they are material practices that take place in real spaces, and they are practices that have to be learned and reproduced over and over again to constitute communities, movements, and the overall urban food renaissance. Later on, I delve into how these communities are formed, asking specifically how they are shaped by the spaces they take place in. I then examine how a set of practices embedded in a set of communities in particular geographic spaces spread up and out into areas like urban politics, policy and social programs?

Actually growing food in the city does require a particular geography, a built environment and landscape with space for plants. Suburban landscapes and hollowed out post-industrial spaces lend themselves particularly well to the agrarian imagination. Access to these kinds of spaces is actually quite limited in cities, and this is where the intersection with the practices of digital culture becomes so critical. If a defining dimension of the food renaissance are the practices of blogging Do-It-Yourself (DIY) garden projects, sharing food policy videos via Facebook, pinning recipes to Pinterest, Tweeting the latest place to eat, one can participate even if their agricultural space is limited to a semi-sunny windowsill. Thus the community of practice begins to take on a rather amorphous, or so it would seem, geography. It is of the city, fundamentally about reshaping the way urban space is used, but also beyond the city, in a virtual space. Even before the digital age, urbanites were imagining and reimagining their cities through the lens of food and agriculture. How these real and imagined spaces come together is on the central questions of this dissertation.

Situating Los Angeles

This dissertation is about phenomena—the rise of food movements, digital culture, and their intersection—that far exceed the boundaries of Los Angeles. But it emphatically takes place in Los Angeles, draws evidence from the city and its citizens, and makes contributions to our understanding of that city as a significant place in its own right. In theoretical terms, the urban food renaissance in Los Angeles must be understood as conjunctural moment that brings together the historically determined geography of the city, contemporary neoliberal urban politics, a cultural zeitgeist preoccupied with food, and the rapidly expanding field of digital communications technology at this specific place and time. More than abstractions colliding, the moment is defined by how home owners, activists, politicians and food enthusiasts and practitioners come together in the sprawling, semi-suburban landscape of Los Angeles to reimagine and remake the city. Thus, this attempt to understand some small food-centric piece of the conjectural moment is a political project to understand how Los Angeles may become a more socially, economically and environmentally just place.

Los Angeles is a misunderstood city, sometimes by intentional boosterism (see Woelke above), but often because of its massive size, the origins, purposes and meanings of the Los Angeles landscape are often obscured. Indeed, there is very little consensus on what geographic territory constitutes Los Angeles. As Ethington (2000) notes, everything from the city, to the county, to five counties to all of southern California is quickly and easily conflated into some abstract notion of “Los Angeles.” There are strategic reasons for when Los Angeles is deployed as a specific juridical space and when it comes to mean a broad region. Amongst the actors in this study, understanding the policy agenda of the metropolitan State is critical to shaping food politics, whereas a general culture of alternative food practices may be quite happy including any and every plant south of Tehachapi. For the sake of clarity, in this dissertation, I am almost always referring to actors, places and events that take place inside of LA County. It is a necessarily arbitrary decision at some level, but allows me to write generally of the region and regional forces without reducing all spaces into one.

No city in the United States has been so ideologically constructed as the anti-urban city as Los Angeles. This has meant a number of things in terms of both its place in scholarly literature on cities and its actual historical development. First, because LA has been seen as such an exception to the history of American urbanism, it has been relatively recently that scholars have begun to take it on as its own area of study with any seriousness (cf Dear, 2003; Ethington, 2000; Soja, 1996, Scott and Soja 1986), despite the foundational works of Carey McWilliams *Southern California: Island on the Land* (1946) and Robert Fogelson’s *The Fragmented Metropolis* (1967), which both capture the history of the city as a place filled with promise and endless potential too often undone by unscrupulous developers and outright racism.

Second, what clearly emerges in the literature on Los Angeles is that much of its growth has been predicated around the promise of it *not* being a city like other cities. What Davis has called the city’s dialectic of “sunshine and noir” (1990) has meant that the city has perpetually struggled to sustain itself on any number of

paradoxical promises: a pastoral landscape with the cultural amenities of a major city, industrial production without class struggle or environmental destruction, an economy built on real-estate without cycles of boom and bust, and political equality under conditions that can only be described as violently white and heteronormative (Deverell 2004, Avila 2006, McClung 2002, Hurewitz, 2007; Davis, 2001; Hise and Deverell 2000)).

Norman Klein (1998) suggests this dialectic is perpetuated by the continuous erasure of LA's history from Angelenos collective memory, so that everything is always new and unencumbered by the historical geography of the city. He does not mean that the city is fake, a simulacra, but constantly being produced and reproduced without any particular allegiance to the past, certainly not to any "real" past. Any sort of authentic history of the city is immediately drawn into question by the grab bag of mission-style architecture that dominates the landscape and cannot help but reveal its detachment from a real place or time. This is especially true in a region that rarely stops booming. It is easy to believe that each wave of immigrants to the city only know what they encounter when they arrive, believing that the city was newly created immediately before their arrival. This imaginary of the city as a blank-slate is often construed from the outside as evidence of Los Angeles's vacuousness, a lack of appreciation of the past and inability to plan for the future. Though, as the city's political, economic and academic boosters counter, it is exactly this ability to see the city as an open place that has allowed immeasurable innovation and dynamic development to happen.

In this milieu produced out of a century and half of the "sunshine and noir" dialectic, this project focuses specifically on the role food and agriculture have played on both sides in the production of Los Angeles. For most of the first half of the 20th century, capital-intensive agriculture was essential to both Los Angeles economy and identity (Walker, 2004). Many of the areas now considered LA's major suburbs were founded in the late 19th and early 20th century as agricultural colonies or functioned as farm supply towns. Even as the interstitial spaces between towns began to fill in with development, city planners continued to advocate for the preservation of agricultural spaces within the city (Scott, 1941). However, by the 1970s most of the vegetable and bean fields had been plowed under for industry, large dairy and cattle farms had moved out of the city, and orchards had become too old or exhausted to be competitive. It was industrial jobs, not the bounty on the side of an orange crate, that lured new residents to the city (Quam-Wickham, 2001; Sackman; 2005).

While essentially correct, the above narrative belies a more complicated set of historical conditions. Los Angeles was filled not only with sprawling orchards and fields of row crops, but also countless small truck farms and single-family homes with expansive gardens. Not as romantic as modern advocates of urban gardening might make them seem, the majority of truck farms before World War II were run by Japanese families, primarily as tenants on land that developers had not yet found other ways to profit from (Kurashige, 2009;). They had been excluded from industrial jobs and increasingly from agricultural labor, and eventually Issei were

banned from owning land and would, of course, ultimately lose their farms during internment (Amalguer, 1994). Despite all of this, by 1915 Japanese farmers were growing 75 percent of vegetables consumed in Los Angeles (Kurashige, 2009, p 66).

Similarly, while there were the garden hobby farmers so frequently profiled in the LA Times and popular mythologies of the city (Yoshihara, 2006), many new denizens of the city found themselves gardening not out of leisure, but out of necessity. As Becky Nicholadies (2002) has shown, the notoriously open-shop ruling class of Los Angeles discovered that they could keep profits even higher if industrial employees could be coerced to work for a wage below even the necessity of daily reproduction by encouraging them to provide their provisions out of their own yards and to build their own homes. The Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce actively encouraged the practice by promoting the subdivision of lots into $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ acre plots and publishing guides for what the new-comer to LA should know about having a small farm—including to live close to a railway line that took one to a factory job and to plan on feeding a family, but not making money on the farm (Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, 1934).

Lastly, large scale agriculture, for all of its bucolic landscapes (particularly true of orchards), was as dependent on the exploitation of a highly racialized labor forces in the past as much as today—though the racial hierarchies and locations of the labor forces have shifted significantly over time (Almaguer, 1994; McWilliams, 1935; Sackman, 2005). Los Angeles agriculture, like all of California, was never largely comprised of the mythologized small family farmer or homesteaders, but has always been defined by the social relations of Capitalism (Walker, 2004). So while it was literally the promise of greener pastures that drew hundreds of thousands of new residents to Los Angeles and gave the city much its shape, it is also agriculture that failed to provide equality and stability to so many in the city, lest modern agrarian dreamers begin to see in every patch of urban garden a new utopian future for the city.

Today, the dream of transforming Los Angeles into a new Garden City has been reborn with gusto. The same can be said of most American cities—certainly urban agriculture is having its moment in the sun in the San Francisco Bay Area, Detroit, New York and Portland, amongst many other cities. But as I will try to show below, this renaissance has taken on valances in Los Angeles that distinguish it from other places, drawing on the particular history and geography of the city. The struggles over using urban space for food production intersect a set of racial and ethnic hierarchies that exist only in Southern California, as do the very urban, or as the case may be, suburban, spaces being struggled over. Similarly, the politics of food and agriculture in Los Angeles, especially as they relate to the local governments themselves, are shaped by the enduring myths outlined above. Formal organizations like the Los Angeles Food Policy Council and ad hoc groups formed to support urban agriculture continue to grapple with the tension between the forces that seek to make Los Angeles a major, influential urban center and popular desires to make it a city of Arcadian leisure. Lastly, as Los Angeles has been influenced through social and popular media, so has it become a significant hearth for ideas

around the food renaissance nationally. LA activists, bloggers, and TEDx presenters have all become known far outside of the city for their engagements with food and gardening in the city. They are having notable impact on a national conversation around the future of alternative food systems. In all of these ways, to this day, Los Angeles continues to imagine and reimagine itself through food and agriculture as a city unlike any other. The origins, material present and potential futures of this urban-agrarian imagination are the subject of this dissertation.

The Kernels of the Study

The dissertation is organized into the following chapters:

Chapter 1: From Hog Farms to Hollywood

This chapter argues that Los Angeles has always been imagined and built around a “Garden City” fantasy—that small scale agriculture, especially individual production, can alleviate the harsh realities of developing a huge industrial city. In addition to a general overview of agriculture’s significance to Los Angeles as a cultural and economic force, I look at how crises bring forth the starkest uses of the agrarian imaginary and landscape in the first half of the 20th century.

Chapter 2: Welcome to the New Garden City

In this chapter I provide a general overview of the current revival of interest in gardening, farming, local food and related activities as they occur inside of Los Angeles. I argue that what is interesting about the urban food movement is not the novelty of the food in the city per se, but how urban gardeners and activists redefine what the city is or could be through their everyday experiences. I then suggest that we should take these alternative visions seriously, for both their potential and serious limitations.

Chapter 3: The Southern (California) Question

This third chapter builds on second chapter to argue that, while the daily practices of foodies are significant to the urban experience, we also need to understand that change—in the food system and the urban fabric—is also created through politics. I examine several Los Angeles-based groups as they grapple with how to best engage an ideology that disavows politics but constantly collides with the reality that power is unevenly distributed in the city.

Chapter 4: The Garden in the Machine

In this chapter I argue that what differentiates the current interest in urban agriculture and alternative food systems from a long history of such projects is the presence of digital communication technologies. I examine their role in not just logistically facilitating the spread of information about food and farming, but more importantly the co-production of a “post-industrial” imaginary for cities like Los Angeles. I look at how foodies are navigating their online and offline interests in

food and how both shape their understanding and expectations of urban life—especially as they reflect back on the groups covered in chapters 2 and 3.

ⁱ The nature and purpose of school farms and gardens changed dramatically over the first half of the twentieth century (cf. Lawson 2005), which was as true in Los Angeles as anywhere, going from vocational programs to lingering relics of a “rural set of values.” In all cases, they were not training the highly-exploited laborers who did and do the majority of work in California’s Capitalist Agriculture, but were meant to prepare a more yeomen and land owning class of students for an agricultural economy.

ⁱⁱ Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) has become an increasingly popular way for consumers interested in alternative agriculture to support farmers. In most places in the US, a CSA is connected directly to a single farm where the consumer pays an annual subscription and receives a weekly box of produce from the farm of whatever is in season. The idea is to provide income to the farmers year round and give them a sense of how much to plant when to fulfill orders, rather than hoping for high sales at peak times of harvest. In California, CSAs have a similar purpose, but are often providing a box that is an aggregate of several farms by a 3rd party (or one small farm that cannot meet demand/diversity on its own). In California the subscriptions tend to be for shorter time periods, but the year round growing season here means that farmers are not under the same temporal pressures.

ⁱⁱⁱ See Cheng (2013) for her use of Althusser on schools as an important site of social research.

Chapter 1: From Hog Farms to Hollywood

The environs of Los Angeles and its people became consumed with gardening. Gardening became a source of livelihood and pride. Southern Californians grew fruit trees, and they grew ornamental trees. Their identity and economy became fixed to plants. [...] They planted for beauty as well as for the market and remade the landscape in Eden's image. But aesthetic delight in this cultural landscape was ultimately subordinated to a drive to turn place into profit.

- Sackman, Douglas C. "A Garden of Worldly Delights," in *Land of Sunshine: An Environmental History of Southern California* (2006)

Mr. Dreysdale been after me to buy some cattle. Just the other day he says to me 'Mr. Clampett, you've got 25 million dollars in cash. You ought to put some of that money in stock!'

The Beverley Hillbillies "Jed Buys Stock," Season 1, Episode 5.

From 1962 to 1971 audiences across the United States laughed boisterously as the Clampett family bumbled its way through Los Angeles. The eponymous hillbilly family of the hit T.V. show *The Beverley Hillbillies* could not have been more out of place in the modern, sophisticated landscape of Southern California. The conceit of the show, the source of its comedic value, was that any audience watching would know that Los Angeles was a land of fast new cars, freeways, aerospace, houses with pools, Hollywood glamour, and a socially liberal youth-beach culture. It may not have had the fast paced cosmopolitanism of New York City or industrial might of Detroit, but Los Angeles was indisputably marked as the future of America, a land of wealth and leisure (Culver 2010; McWilliams 1973, 150–154). It was also the home of television, the quintessential technology of leisure, and it was no mistake that one of television's earliest famous families took up residency in Los Angeles.

Twenty years earlier, the premise of the show would have still been humorous, but not nearly as much of a stark contrast. Los Angeles was simultaneously proud to be a booming metropolis and a literal cow town. Rural identities and culture were not yet, entirely, the stuff of comic relief. Rather, "hillbillies," cowboys and other rural Angelenos were one of the city's major cultural products. As historian Peter La Chapelle (2007) has shown, "hillbilly music," along with an associated lifestyle of western dress and dancing, filled record labels and dance halls in Los Angeles between the wars. As he argues, this was far more than the tastes of the Okies and Arkies who had helped swell the city's population during the depression, it was an identity that was produced in and arose from the unique peri-urban landscape of pre-war Los Angeles. A city where the blue and white collar workers alike lived side by side with farms, gardens and ranches as much as were part of any bustling metropolis. Maintaining "hillbilly" aesthetics in Los Angeles may

have been primarily about adapting pre-migration identities to a booming industrial city. But Angelenos navigated the “slight case of cultural confusion” (to use McWilliams phrase) by celebrating both the urban and the rural, fusing the landscape of Los Angeles with a uniquely Southern California identity.

In that sense this chapter looks at the role rural and, especially, agrarian myths have played in shaping the geography of the city. At the same time, I show that they were not simply myths, Los Angeles was once a very agrarian place. Before World War II traversing LA County would have taken one through thousands of acres of fields, orchards, ranches and other agricultural spaces (see map 1 below). The Los Angeles County Chamber of Commerce promoted using single-family home lots for small-scale agriculture. The Los Angeles Times ran a weekly “Farm & Tractor” section. Farms and gardens were still a major part of the Los Angeles Unified School District curriculum. The most productive agriculture features of the region would mostly fade from the landscape of Los Angeles by the early 1960s, but the promise of an Arcadian metropolis lingered and lingers still in both the built environment and mythos of the city.

This chapter covers roughly the first half of the 20th century. During that time, Los Angeles was well on its way to becoming synonymous with Hollywood and suburban sprawl, but on the national stage it was still markedly “of the west.” It was a place to be in the sunshine, enjoy the bounties of nature with a modicum of mixing one’s labor with the soil. From the time California was seized by the United States, Los Angeles’s boosters and civic builders have constructed the city as a place to fuse “rural” American values with urban modernity. Culturally, socially and physically, Los Angeles has been imagined as the final synthesis of the schism between the Jefferson’s agrarian ideal and Hamilton’s urban entrepreneurism that has pulled at the country since its founding (Weinstein 1996). The myth says that, in LA at the very edge of The West, there can be a city unlike any other, which is both fertile and opulent. Like all myths, people have adapted the story of Los Angeles as the middle-way city to various projects at various times, often to contradictory ends. The Garden City of the 1910s has become the sprawling metropolis of the 2010s. But both draw on the imaginary that Los Angeles *ought* to be a utopian sort of place, always suggesting a near and achievable future. William Deverell has called this Los Angeles’s identity as “the city of the future,” “The metropolis would inherit the future and other places would grow to resemble Los Angeles. The future belonged to Los Angeles, the future *was* Los Angeles” (2004, 3).

Like most myths, Los Angeles’ agrarian utopia was not entirely fictional. There were very real and significant spaces and moments in the historical geography of Los Angeles that fed the legend of its urban-rural identity. Angelenos’ efforts to live out this myth then shaped the reality of the city as well. This chapter explores several periods where this dialectic between the real agrarian spaces and the imagination of Los Angeles as an Arcadian city became an explicit strategy for navigating major transitions in the city’s history. The dialectic is constantly present in Los Angeles, but is, I argue, laid bare in moments when the city is in (perceived or real) crises. When the city’s economic stability—or its meteoric rise—begins to shake, these are the moments where the promise of easily attained abundance arising from the sunshine, soil and moral intrepidity of the citizenry must be

reestablished. This chapter first establishes that there was an agrarian landscape to draw from, before continuing on to three case studies of programs and movements that relied on the agrarian myth and reality of Los Angeles to sustain the city through crisis.

The standard narrative of Los Angeles's development is most often constructed from stories of cars, suburbs and segregation (Ford 1961; Fogelson 1967; Waldie 1996; Longstreth 1998; Sides 2006). These narratives have been increasingly complicated and nuanced by contemporary scholarship, but tend to overlook or understate the impact agriculture has had on Los Angeles (Hise 1997; Deverell 2004; Avila 2006; Pulido, Barraclough, and Cheng 2012). Though Garcia (2001) provides a helpful discussion of the region's mixture of agriculture and urban uses as part of its appeal to the burgeoning citrus industry, very often we get the sense that agriculture was simply an advertising gimmick that used orange crate labels to lure unsuspecting Midwesterners to Los Angeles to be duped by real estate speculators. Or, relatedly, agriculture was simply the land use that existed *before* the real metropolitan Los Angeles. Historians and social critics tend to treat the plowing under of Los Angeles's farms as the beginning of a more interesting story of mass suburbanization and industrialization.^{iv} Neither of these stories is wrong *per se*. The intention with which LA boosters used hyperbolic iconography of Southern California's fecundity is well documented (McWilliams 1973; Culver 2010; Hise 1997; Klein 1997) And in terms of the economics of growth at the urban fringe, housing and industry will invariably draw more capital investment than almost any form of agriculture. It is with this economic truth that Kenneth T Jackson ends his seminal book on suburbia, *The Crabgrass Frontier*, with the following 1870s English Jingle:

*The Richest Crop in any field
Is a crop of bricks for it to yield
The richest crop that it can grow
Is a crop of houses in a row*

(quoted in Jackson 1985, 305)

It is well understood that fertile land is valuable for its productivity, but often an order of magnitude less valuable than land subdivided for a rapidly growing urban population. Los Angeles has been no exception, famous as it once was for its cattle, wheat, bean fields, fresh vegetables and citrus groves. When the time came for the city builders to put up their new factories and homes, there was nothing to stop them from bulldozing 1,000 trees a day (Ford 1961, 51).

However, what these narratives miss is the extent to which agriculture was integral to the formation of Los Angeles *as a city*. That is, agriculture did not pre-date Los Angeles as an urban place, but was foundational to its formation as a seemingly atypical American city. One way of looking at this is to understand agriculture as the first industry in LA. The city is famous for its rapid growth centered on oil, entertainment and manufacturing—all of which drew hopeful residents to the city, which in turn fed the need for more urban housing.^v But thousands of Angelenos had come to LA to work in agriculture itself. From Chinese workers in citrus crops and vegetables, to the Japanese immigrants who quickly

found a niche in truck farming, to the much lampooned Midwestern transplants, agriculture promised a living in Los Angeles. According to the California Fruit Growers Exchange, by the 1920s, there were over 23,000 people working in picking and packaging fruit alone (cited in Garcia 2001, 60). And for those who controlled the business, as we shall see, it was an extraordinarily profitable sector for many years.

Los Angeles Times reporter Nancy Yoshihara suggested a number of years ago that one way to observe the shifting significance of “growing” in Los Angeles was to look at the Sunday supplement of the *Los Angeles Times* (2006). What began as the “Farm and Tractor” section of the newspaper in 1918 would become the “Farm and Orchard” section in 1925, “Farm and Garden” in 1929, “Southland Homes and Gardens” in 1935, and simply the “Home” section by 1940. Yoshihara argues the *Times*' adjustments suggest changing attitudes towards the role of agriculture in the city. As the above suggests, there are many ways to explain the uneven transformation of Los Angeles from an agrarian metropolis to its modern condition. The transitions in economic geography, the intertwined industrialization and residentialization of the landscape, have been well documented elsewhere, albeit without significant emphasis on agriculture. In this chapter, I place the emphasis on the social and cultural transitions expressed in urban-agrarianism that have accompanied and enabled the city's long slow transformation from “Eden” to a “hellish metropolis” at the edge of the nation. Institutions that both reflected and shaped culture and economy of the city, like the *Los Angeles Times*, the Los Angeles County Chamber of Commerce, Los Angeles Unified School District and self-organized civic groups will be the key players in my efforts to illustrate the centrality of agrarianism to urban visions of the city.

Eden Everywhere

While the majority of this chapter is dedicated to three case studies that explore the ideological work urban agriculture has been put to in Los Angeles, it is useful to start here with a general sense of the prominence of agriculture in the region during the first half of the century. Even as California's Central Valley and Imperial Valley grew into the archetypes of massive, capital-intensive monoculture farms, Los Angeles hung onto its own significant agrarian landscape. If one were to have arrived at the Port of Los Angeles in 1940 by ship and driven the eleven miles to downtown, or taken one of the still existent red cars, the amalgam of landscapes would have been staggering. Starting in one of the busiest ports on the west coast and arriving in a bustling central business district, replete with major department stores, towering bank buildings and gridlocked traffic, a traveler would have also passed through thousands of acres of bean, celery, carrot and other vegetable fields, citrus orchards and strawberry fields, dairies and hog farms, and myriad processing facilities constructed to accommodate the cornucopia being produced on a daily basis in Los Angeles. Venturing out from downtown in any direction it would have been difficult to travel for more than a mile in any direction without passing some form of cultivation. Even as subdivisions and new homes were rapidly filling “open” spaces, agriculture was inescapably part of the landscape of Los Angeles. As the map below shows, it was far from the only feature in the landscape—Los Angeles was

decidedly *not* rural, it was neither the small villages of the East nor the plains of the Midwest—both commercial and industrial centers were well established by the 1930s.

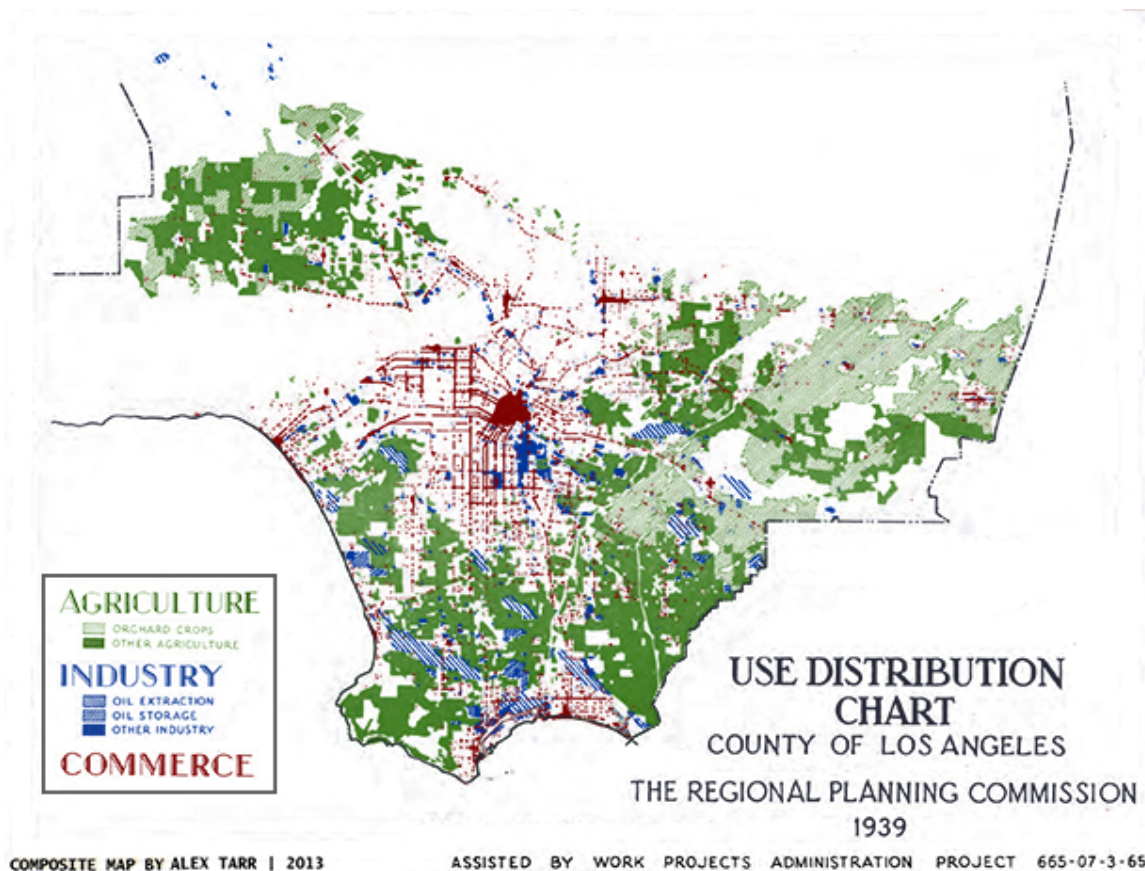


Figure 4: Land Use Distribution Chart (1939), adapted from WPA Project 665-07 3-65

It is less surprising to consider the prominence of agriculture in midcentury Los Angeles if we consider its long-standing centrality to the region's economy. Farms and gardens were more than hobbies and aesthetic pastimes in the city, they constituted a central piece of its economic power. For the first half of the 20th century Los Angeles was the most productive agricultural county in the United States (Walker 2004, 44). Agriculture was not only profitable, but a major part of the semi-urban landscape. By 1890, the county of Los Angeles had 759,933 acres in production across 3,828 farms. By 1940, both acreage and the size of farms had shrunk significantly, but was still an impressive 12,145 farms covering 596,552 acres, and L.A. County was still first in value of output in California and the United States. In the same period, the number of residential units had grown from 18,664 to 1,288,000 (Breivogel 1948, "Land"). So, even as the city boomed into a true metropolis, farming and agriculture remained a significant force in the region.

While Southern California is most famous for its sprawling citrus orchards, a highly diversified agrarian landscape was present across Los Angeles County. The flood of newcomers to the region between the booms of the 1880s and the 1920s meant growing demand for a wide variety of crops. Feed for livestock still dominated agriculture in terms of acreage, but fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as ingredients for locally produced alcohol, could all be produced for a lucrative local market.^{vi} By way of example, the table below, which shows samples from a 1915 California State Horticultural Commission, suggests both the scale and variety of crops already under production in Los Angeles.

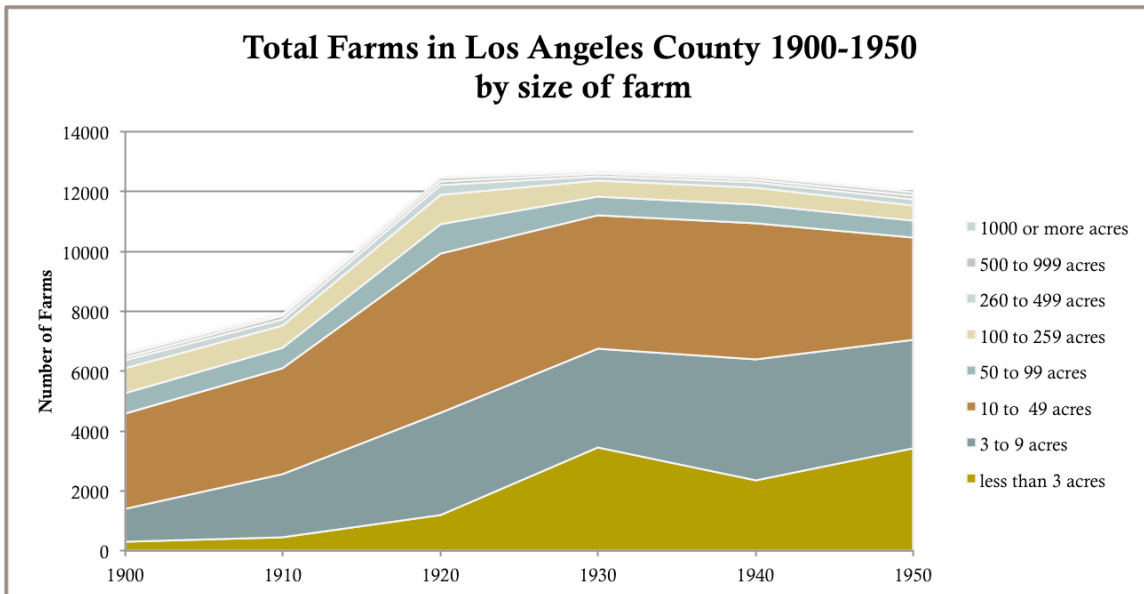
Table 2: Acres in Production by Crop, 1915

CROP	ACRES
Apples	1,400
Barley	31,600
Citrus	71,000
Corn	9,480
Hay & Forage	154,000
Strawberries	1,380
Vegetables	13,385
Wheat	6,150

Source: *California State Horticultural Commission (Rolfe 1915, 18–23)*

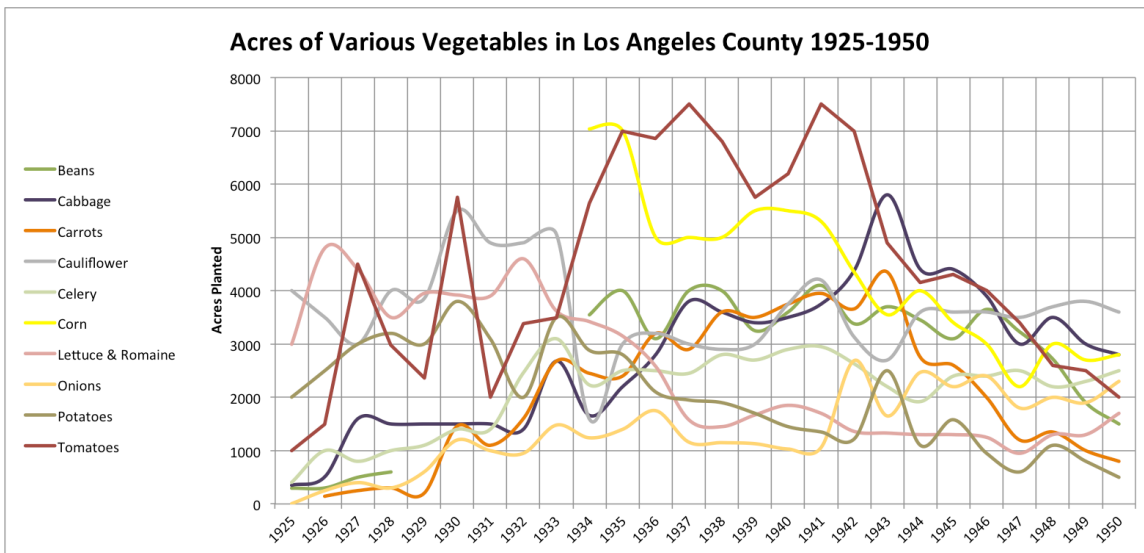
As the chart below shows, the majority of farms in the county were relatively small. Even as the city grew at an explosive rate during the first half of the century, the size of farms did not change dramatically. This reflects the emphasis on specialty crops over field crops in the region and that urban growth after the 1920s acted as a damper on the further expansion of agriculture except at the far edges of the county.

Figure 5: Total Farms in Los Angeles County 1900-1950



Source: *US Census of Agriculture*

Figure 6: Acres of Vegetables, LA County 1925-1950



Los Angeles's cornucopia was far more than an economic engine though; it was the cultural and social force that shaped the city's identity as an American metropolis for nearly a century, from roughly the 1860s to the 1960s. In the 19th century it was not uncommon for a city to be growing into its agricultural hinterland still. Major metropolises like New York and Chicago had agrarian edges that put new housing and industrial developments side-by-side with fields and farms.^{vii} So at first glance there is nothing unusual about Los Angeles having a semi-rural identity as it

grew into a large city at the end of the 19th century amongst its surrounding bean fields and hog farms. But while Eastern and Midwestern cities grew into modern metropolises in the early 20th century, with boosters celebrating their dense, towering steel structures and industrial might, Los Angeles clung to a very different, rural, agriculturally focused mentality. Historian David Axelrod makes the distinction between cities like New York and Chicago, which pursued a “vertical sublime,” and Los Angeles, which pursued a “horizontal sublime.” He argues that urban planners pursued radically different morphologies in these cities in the first decades of the 20th century. Each represented modernity and the future in its own right, but with significantly different impacts on the landscape (2009). What the concept misses, however, is the extent that powerful actors in the region maintained agriculture and a rural as core of Los Angeles’s ethos. They were well aware of its economic significance. Indeed, as late as 1958, the agricultural department of the Chamber of Commerce was still claiming \$2.5 billion a year in “new wealth.”

In the following sections, I look at how crises (real and perceived) in the city bring forth the most sharply articulated versions of agrarian visions for the city. Economic downturns, turmoil associated with the world wars, and population booms all bring agriculture to the surface of both popular and governmental discussions of the city’s relationship to food. First, I examine the city of Los Angeles’s efforts at urban agriculture during World War I to illustrate how the city government supported a limited embrace of growing food in the city to meet popular demand, but ultimately succumbed to the pressure of industrial interests. Second, I move to the onset of the Great Depression, which had a number of major impacts on the region, including the creation of an almost completely forgotten grassroots movement of self-organized, food-oriented cooperatives. In both cases, I place the emphasis less on the larger geopolitical or historical contexts that produce the crisis (though they are important and critically engaged elsewhere by other scholars), and more on what the movements reveal about how Angelenos understood their city—especially when pressed to examine it more closely in moments of crisis.

Ordinance 36487: The Home Garden Committee

In the spring of 1917, Congress passed the Lever Food Act, establishing the United States Food Administration. Future president Herbert Hoover was named as the first director and tasked with securing and stabilizing food supplies for the Allies. The administration is remembered for the amount of relief, largely in the form of wheat, it provided to Europe. At the same time, a major component of Hoover’s plan to stabilize domestic food supplies was to call on Americans to grow more of their own. Approximately half of the U.S. population still lived in rural areas during WWI. For many of them, increased production for domestic consumption would have been relatively easy. But for the increasingly urban population, raising more food provided a unique set of challenges. American urbanites took up Hoover’s call all the same, converting yards, empty lots and parks into productive spaces. Contemporary gardeners, food activists and scholars often point to the flourishing of

“War Gardens” during WWI as a key moment establishing the precedent for urban agriculture (Lawson 2005).

Los Angeles excitedly threw its support behind various initiatives to expand food production in the city and county. Hoover’s call in many ways fit into the already dominant ideology of what could be happening in the city vis-à-vis home gardening. The impact of World War I on the United States pales in comparison to its effect on Western Europe, but it marked a severe disruption of the status quo in terms of Americans daily lives. In it, Angelenos found a moment to materialize the mythos of a hybrid Arcadian metropolis. The proposals for what would become Los Angeles’s “Home Garden Council,” demonstrated how Angelenos’ saw a chance to put *urban*, residential land to agricultural use. It was also a moment to establish what would become an ongoing trope in urban gardening—its purported ability to endow the urban poor with new skills and make them productive citizens (Lawson 2005, 146). Lastly, it was moment for Los Angeles’s elites and boosters to engage in their favorite preoccupation: demonstrating Los Angeles’s leadership as a new kind of city. In Los Angeles, to convert empty lots and yards to agricultural production was not a step backwards towards a pre-urban time, nor to stall the march of progress towards a dense, modern city. In Los Angeles, gardens were an important stake in the bold claim that a city could and should be dominated by a rationalized mixture of single-family homes and green spaces, a Garden City.

The Los Angeles City Council created The Home Garden Committee through ordinance 36487. It was the kind of far-reaching document in support of urban agriculture that contemporary urban food activists can only dream of. First and foremost the ordinance established the committee, creating paid staff positions and funds to support the work of the committee. It authorized the mayor to buy and distribute large quantities of seeds and potatoes for the planting of vacant land. Perhaps most radically, it empowered the committee to use its funds to acquire the use of vacant lands. However, in the fourth section of the ordinance, the City Council lays out explicitly that the funds are barred from being used “for the distribution of seeds or seed potatoes, or the cultivation of said vacant lands for purely commercial purposes, the intention being to assist such persons as the Mayor and said committee shall deem proper to raise food products for home consumption” (“Ordinance 36487” 1917). This explicit emphasis on production for home consumption, to supplement individual diets rather than commercial prospects, portends an ongoing tension in urban agriculture in Los Angeles. As we shall see, in moments of perceived socio-economic crisis, the city is quick to fall back on the promise of its fecund soil for sustenance, but always with the caveat that it will not interfere with existent commercial interests in the same land. The goal of urban agriculture is, rather, to maintain and support a population healthy enough to continue to work.

The committee’s biggest champion was local attorney Luther Brown. He became the director of the Home Gardening Committee once it was established. His letters to the city council on behalf of the committee suggest just to what an extent the home gardening project drew on the myth of Los Angeles’s agrarian potential. In an early letter to the Mayor at the start of the work, Brown wrote, “Leaving out the agricultural districts, there are in the city of Los Angeles proper not less than seven

or eight thousand acres of ground suitable for growing garden truck, and full much more in the back yard spaces" (1917). He went on to say "There are enough idle people and people who have time to spare in the city of Los Angeles to plant and cultivate[sic] all this vacant land." He then laid out a plan in which the council will be responsible for plowing land, buying seeds and coordinating the instruction of the city's idle population. This last point is significant. Brown and others did not see home gardening as something innately desirable that the unemployed could simply take up. Building an army of gardeners would require significant training and coordination. Already extant groups like Parent Teacher's Associations and local service organizations became the nexus for organizing such trainings. The end result he promised would be a veritable "army of garden workers," hoes in hand, ready to turn vacant land into verdant land. Herein lies the perpetual struggle for urban agriculture in Los Angeles—the land seems so willing, but the hand needs to be guided to it.

In a letter from August 1917, Brown wrote:

Owing to the peculiar natural advantages possessed by the City of Los Angeles in the way of so much fertile vacant land, abundance of water and all year growing climate, there is an open opportunity in the home garden work for every citizen, young or old, rich or poor, man or woman, to do his or her part in a direct, effective, practical and patriotic way and in addition to the financial benefits heretofore mentioned, there are numerous other benefits fully as apparent; our people are learning habits of thrift, industry and economy; the daily hour of labor in the garden will directly improve the health of every one who engages in it; the educational value of the work to the children will produced a lasting benefit, the value of which cannot be reckoned in money; thousands of people, more or less dependent upon public or private charity, will be made self supporting, in part at least; vacant lots heretofore unsightly with weeds and rubbish will be made beautiful with growing things; thousands of people who for many reasons would not be willing to hire out as farm laborers, will be ready and willing to work a few hours a day on vacant lands within easy reach of their homes; these are only a few of the beneficial results to be accomplished by the continuation of the Home Garden Movement.

Brown's argument presents themes that would become common in later efforts to encourage urban agriculture, and certainly in the contemporary moment. Gardening extends well beyond its immediate economic and patriotic uses to a universally applicable practice capable of inculcating ideal urban citizens with good morals, including the willingness and ability to beautify the city.

The social disruption of World War I and the looming threat of food scarcity, served as an important moment to imagine and articulate this agrarian potential for Los Angeles. It was a moment for these tropes to be realized in some unprecedented ways. By October 1918, the Home Garden Committee reported it was overseeing 98,537 gardens. This means that if the Home Garden Committee was not

exaggerating too severely, there was approximately one garden for every nine people in Los Angeles at the height of their program. In the same report, the Council reported that under the direction of Mrs. J.T. Anderson, they had purchased over 50,000 seeds packets, with another 42,5000 donated (*City of Los Angeles Council Records 112 1918*). The home garden committee mobilized a wide array of the city's services. Schools, in particular, became sites not just for growing, but coordinating the instruction of students young and old in the practicalities of growing food. Even the notorious Los Angeles Police Department was contributing to the movement by growing vegetables in Griffith Park.

It was not all roses (or potatoes as the case may be) for the Home Garden Council, however. As much enthusiasm as the mayor and city council had initially shown for the project, the home gardeners were perpetually short of funds and the city council unwilling to allocate more than a few hundred dollars to help supplement seed purchases. Some vacant land was donated or lent, but funds for acquiring land were harder to come by. Neighbors complained about the presence of gardeners, and the associated traffic, in their neighborhoods.^{viii}

More seriously, the conservative commercial agricultural interests in Los Angeles began to express concern about the city subsidizing urban gardening projects. While ostensibly supporting the Garden Council (many companies had donated seeds for example) in their endeavors to combat hunger and support the war effort, companies complained that the project might be overfunded. Under the ageless pretext of being concerned that tax payers money was being wasted, the Klein Smith Fruit Company wrote the City Council to discourage them from actually employing gardeners. This, they argued, ran counter to Hoover's call for volunteers and risked making dependents out of the gardeners. Moreover, they thought it would be bad form for the government to use Angelenos' tax dollars to distort the local market by unfairly subsidizing competition. The idea that the Home Garden Council might threaten commercial interests may seem odd, but Brown was lobbying for a much-expanded program, calling for a long term and potentially more permanent home garden movement. This would not be just for sustenance, but an economic engine in its own right. He suggested that Los Angeles was lacking in productive factories and exports, but with the proper support, urban gardeners could produce enough surpluses for export as to net the city \$10 million.

Capital need not have been so worried, since Los Angeles never saw anything close to Brown's vision realized. At the national scale, once the crisis moment of the World War I had passed, the United States Food Administration was quickly transformed into the American Relief Administration, which focused on transferring the surpluses of industrializing agriculture to the famine struck Soviet Union. In Los Angeles, support for the Home Garden Council seemingly dried up as the city moved into a period of unprecedented growth. As Greg Hise emphasizes, the decade saw Los Angeles county's population grow from 900,000 in to 2.2 million in 1930 (a 140 percent increase), or to put it in more classic boosterish LA terms, "an average of 350 newcomers a day for ten years" (cited in Hise 2001, 18). The floods of people marked a sea change in the geography of the city, as Los Angeles came into its own as not just an agricultural and tourist destination, but a serious industrial center in its own right (Sitton and Deverell 2001; Fogelson 1967; Davis 1998)

The war gardens may have been gone, but Los Angeles residential landscape continued to take on a distinctly suburban identity. The seeds for what Laura Barraclough has termed “rural-urbanism” sprouted all over the city. The “production of rural landscapes by the urban state, capital and other urban interests” (Barraclough 2011, 2) would increasingly become a defining characteristic of Los Angeles’s uneven geography. As hundreds of thousands of new residents migrated to Los Angeles in the 1920s, the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce promoted a new vision of urban life in the “Small Farm Homes.” Promising the middle class life to upwardly mobile urban workers in Los Angeles and the pleasures and values of a rural lifestyle, the Chamber encouraged new residents to buy or build a small single-family house surrounded by anywhere from a quarter to whole acre of productive land. As with the war gardens, the small farm home was meant only to provision the family at the house, as a means of supplementing income and, more vaguely, maintain rural values (Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce 1934). Many working class migrants to the city were unable to live out the Chamber’s utopian vision. They were, however, still forced into significant levels of self provisioning—from building their own houses to gardening and raising small live stock—to supplement poverty wages (Nicolaidis 2002; 2001). As Mike Davis has shown, city elites actively used the promise of a self-provisioning working class, fed off of nature itself, to attract industrial development. Industry came and, ironically, did much to undermine the Garden City vision of Los Angeles, while simultaneously setting in motion the conditions for the next crisis—when the agrarian landscape would again be pulled to the forefront of Angelenos’ lives (Davis 2001; 1998).

The Small Farm Home

In 1927, the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce began publishing a booklet titled, “What the Newcomer Should Know about the Small Farm Home in Los Angeles.” The guide was a formalized promotion to what was already becoming a popular trend in Los Angeles: building a small, single story home on a large subdivided lot—usually between $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ acre. The booklet encouraged prospective buyers to move to Los Angeles to build modest homes on land that they bought.

The small books were, at face value, technical guides to the practicality of having a home that was also a functioning diversified farm. They provided lists of spaces needed for various components of the farm. On a one acre plot the guide suggested a 50’ by 80’ space for the house, on a half-acre a 35’ by 45’ space. This would have been for a relatively small house on a very large lot, but was proposed as a reasonable and affordable starter house that could be expanded if the family did well. The Chamber was very interested in making sure newcomers did not get in over their heads financially—at the end of the day the homes were supposed to help sell real estate and provide a reliable labor force. Beyond the house, the guide calls for a 10’ by 40’ space for poultry or other small livestock, and then using .43 acres of the lot for fruits, berries and small vegetable gardens. On a one-acre plot, this would leave almost half an acre for light-commercial production, though the guides were always adamant that the Small Farm grower should not attempt to compete with commercial interests. A few surplus eggs or some extra fruit could be sold at a

local farmers market for some extra disposable income, or traded amongst neighbors, but nobody was expected to make a living off their small bits of agricultural land.

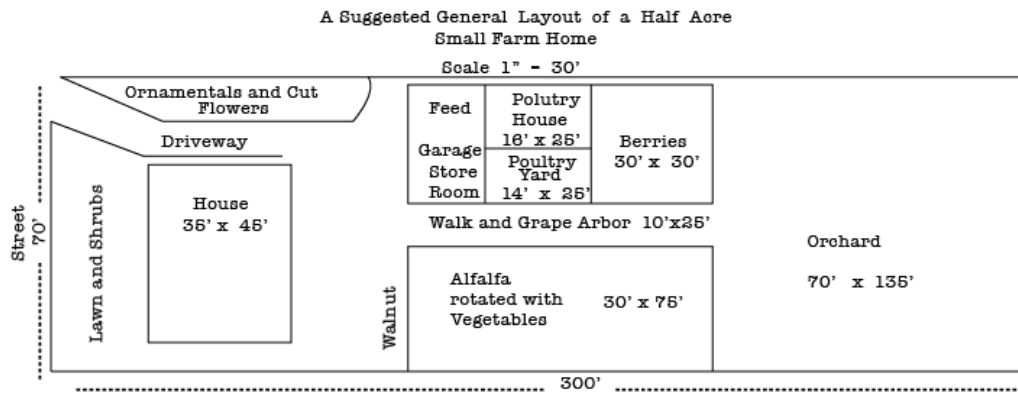


Figure 7: reproduced from *What The Newcomer Should Know About the Small Farm Home in Los Angeles* (1934)

Beyond technical instruction, the Small Farm Home booklets were guides to a form of urban, community engineering. The newcomer to Los Angeles was not only given instructions on how to plant, what were good crops, and the basics of small animal husbandry, but also where to purchase a tract and locate their home. Throughout the pamphlets, the Chamber emphasize that a Small Farm Home should never be located more than 15 miles from the place of work of the owner. The admonishment presumed that the new small farm home owner would, first, have stable employment at one of the region's new industrial centers and, second, would most likely walk from their home to a Red Line car to their job. Fifteen miles was determined to be the maximum reasonable commute. Along similar lines, the guides suggested that the owner should plan on working 5-6 days a week, with a 7th day for gardening and farming, but the emphasis being placed on being able to pay off the mortgage on the house. Lastly, the guides repeatedly reminded the potential farmer that they should not plan on selling products for a living. Their wages were to come from commercial and industrial employment. A small plot would not provide the space for an economy of scale of profitable production. And, as if just to drive the point home, the pamphlets reminded the reader that the much bigger and more profitable commercial agricultural interests would quickly outcompete any small back yard farmer. The take home message was that the Small Farm Home would provide a different kind of life and community for the new workers in Los Angeles, but was fundamentally meant to shore up the capitalist social relations of an industrial city. The landscape would look remarkably different with thousands of open lot home surrounded by miniature farms, but the wage relationship would be even further entrenched (the power of the mortgage), while capital's interests in both the city and the country would be maintained.

Like so many popular schemes in Los Angeles, the Small Farm Home idea was at its core a real estate development scheme. The city's elites certainly had an

ideological commitment to building a new kind of city that avoided the crowded industrial slums of eastern and European cities (Axelrod 2009), but it was one that fit nicely with their imperative to sell a lot of land (c.f. Weiss 1987; McWilliams 1973 discussion of the “Sociology of the Boom”). One edition of the guide reminded the potential buyer that:

Most of the areas in and around Los Angeles City are entirely satisfactory for small farm homes. In most cases, the prospective purchaser will find reputable real estate dealers who are engaged in the development of small farm home projects involving the sub-division of tracts of land.
(Ernest 1935)

The “reputable” nature of real estate developers, especially those engaged in selling newcomers on the agrarian dream of Los Angeles, proved to be somewhat suspect. In one humorously titled exposé, anonymously published as “Sunshine and Grief in Southern California: Where Good Men go wrong and Wise Men lose their money,” a former real estate agent wrote:

The idea that money is easily made in agricultural pursuits in California has become such a fixed thing in the minds of eastern people that no one seems to doubt that one can find independence on an acre of ground, or something a little larger; yet the majority of those who in recent years have invested money there learned some startling facts [...]

He goes on to say:

Despite the glowing stories of prosperity from chambers of commerce and land vendors—the latter engaged primarily in selling country homes with an income to newcomers—the California farmer is actually in a leaky boat compared with many agriculturists in other sections of the country who quietly paddle their own canoes and have little to say about their own communities
(Sunshine and Grief in Southern California, 191-192)

That the Los Angeles County Chamber of Commerce would help to swindle newcomers to the city is no surprise. Their sole purpose at the time was as a notoriously conservative organization operating in support of Los Angeles right-wing business community. They worked tirelessly to bring new capital and new people to Los Angeles, and control how both were distributed across the region. For a private business group, their relationship to the city and county governments was entangled to say the least. When John Anson Ford was elected to the County Board of Supervisors in 1934, he was disturbed to discover the Chamber (and associated “all year clubs”) were still receiving close to half a million dollars a year from the county—at the height of the great depression (Ford 1961, 36). At the same time, the Chamber worked across their own interest groups, following whichever promised the greatest (most profitable) future. Indeed, one of the most revealing elements of

the Newcomer guides was the quite explicit suggestion that Small Farm homes be built on subdivided farm and orchard land. So, ironically, even as future Angelenos were being lured to the city on an agrarian dream, they were participating in the transition from LA's first major industry, agriculture, to its most enduring industry, real estate development.

The Small Farm Home was not simply a fantastical promotional tool dreamed up by the Chamber of Commerce. There were, by 1934, somewhere around 12,000 farms in Los Angeles, with many under 5 acres – a set of small farms, whether of the Chamber of Commerce variety or not (Kirkman, 9). A joint study by the Department of Planning and Works Progress Administration revealed that by 1940 there were approximately 7,680 acres of land being used just for small farm homes (W. J. Fox 1940). The *Los Angeles Times* regularly ran supplements on home gardening and contests in support of the Small Farm Homes (Barraclough 2011, 32–39).

The onset of the Great Depression brought a wider and more substantial investment in the Small Farm Home idea when the federal government took it up under the aegis of the Division of the Subsistence Homesteads (DHS).^{ix} During its brief two-year existence (1933-1935), the DHS oversaw the creation of 34 new communities centered on small, home scale subsistence agriculture. The program was modeled on similar ideas to the Small Farm Home that had been popular around the country, but drew particular enthusiasm from Angeleno supporters. Ross Gast, who had been at the Chamber of Commerce and ran the *Los Angeles Times*' "Small Farm Home" column, became instrumental in bringing federal dollars to Southern California's subsistence homesteading. Through his politicking at both the federal and local level of government, he ensured that both El Monte and San Fernando became model sites for the subsistence homestead program. For political reasons too nuanced to cover here neither El Monte nor San Fernando, or any of the other communities for that matter, became anything more than test projects (c.f. Carriker 2010 for an indepth study of the DSH in California). The DSH was fated to be one of the smallest of the New Deal programs without significant impact on the country, but its confluence with Angeleno ideals of urbanism is worth noting.

As Gast wrote in one of his many pieces laying out the justification for an urban subsistence home, the program was neither meant to compete with large scale agriculture, nor move people out from the city per se:

Because of the present overproduction in agricultural commodities, it is impossible to encourage a program which envisages the establishment of additional commercial farms; hence the term "subsistence"— which means, in the first place, that these homesteads will produce food for home consumption only. Secondly, it is viewed as impractical to consider a program which would require these families, even under the sternest pressure of economic necessity, to move away from their accustomed communities into remote country sections, abandoning the cultural and educational opportunities of city and town life for the primitive existence of the pioneer settler. The subsistence homesteads program is, therefore, decidedly different from a "back to the farm movement"

in any sense.
(Gast 1934, 241)

Gast touches on several key points here. First, that the problem with the countryside was not a shortage of labor but an overabundance of production (see next section). Second, he reinforces the notion that the urban population of the United States, for all of its romanticized visions of the countryside, was on the whole unwilling to give up the amenities of urban life. Third, during the early 20th century, especially during the depression years, the United States had seen various “back-to-the-land” movements (Carriker 2010, 9–10), which were quite different from what the Small Farm Home advocates were doing in LA. Though he does not touch upon the subject directly, we can also add that the subsistence homestead plan was not part of the utopian movements that occur with some regularity in California (cf. Fred Turner 2006; T. Miller 2012). Rather, it muddled together political views around such “practical ideas” that it drew in everyone from arch conservative LA Mayor Shaw to socialist politico Upton Sinclair (Carriker 2010, 90). In these senses, it shares much more in common with contemporary movements to repurpose urban and suburban land as agriculturally productive (Roberts 2013).

Although the Federal subsistence homestead plan had effectively ceased to exist by 1940,^x going into the 10th year of the Great Depression the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce continued to use the small farm home as a framework for attracting newcomers to the city. The industrial ramp-up to World War II was on the cusp of sending the city into another round of booming expansion, while at the same time subsistence homes had done very little to restore the economy. Given this, the rhetoric around the farm was shifting and becoming more explicitly imperial. The summary of the work they had to do in 1941 read: “Attracting Newcomers and New Money... both are necessary in building an empire. Both must be of the desirable type.” In the section on land settlement, the Chamber’s goals and their justifications (in italics) read:

1. Bring to Southern California and establish on small-farm homes 2,500 families with reasonably assured incomes from annuities, investments, retirement pay, etc.
Home ownership plus assured income makes desirable citizens.
2. Mail "Your Ranch Home in Los Angeles County" booklet and individual letters to 5,000 persons of substantial means.
County estate type of development is one of our best bets for future. Permanent settlement of high-income people helps to offset indigent invasion.
3. Continue to discourage immigration of persons who would be a burden on the community.
Correspondence and personal contact with thousands of inquiries give us the opportunity to "select" our new citizens and discourage those who probably would not find opportunity here.
4. Establish on small-farm homes an additional 2,500 families of industrial workers.
Much progress already made. Creates better citizens, and is desired by employers because employees have supplemental income.
5. Make a survey of 100 small-farm homes in county.
Will give us needed data for promoting more of them along improved lines.
6. Revise "What Newcomers Should Know" series.
Gives prospective investors factual information prerequisite to sound investment.

7. Continue advisory and appraisal services for prospective buyers of farmlands and products.
Helps to discharge our obligation to newcomers to get them off to a good start.

The year 1942 saw the publication of the 8th version of “What the Newcomer should know about the Small Farm Home in Los Angeles County.” Employees from the Chamber had completed most of their 5th goal and visited over 60 small farm homes and proudly declared in the new edition that:

Our personal contacts with these successful homeowners have convinced us more than ever before that the small farm home is a definite adjunct to the sound development of this community. Valuable under ordinary circumstances, these properties become indispensable during and after a war, or in other periods of economic stress.

Throughout the promotion of the small farm home movement, its supporters consistently touted its ability to build the right kind of community, alleviate economic stress, and inculcate good citizenship through farming—tropes that will return many times over in contemporary arguments for urban homestead. But as Raymond Williams reminds us, “community” is always used as a positive, warmly persuasive term (1985, 76), thus we must always be diligent to ask “what community and for whom?” As Laura Barraclough has shown in her study of the San Fernando Valley, the community imagined for the small farm homes was narrowly constructed around a white-supremacist vision of an ideal community (Barraclough 2011). When the Chamber of Commerce talked about “the best people,” they meant whites and *whites only*. Los Angeles’s elites are infamous for trying to make city a white-spot on the map (Deverell 2004; Avila 2006; Almaguer 2008). Tragically, even the DSH communities in Los Angeles were slated to be white only (Carriker 2010). The small farm home supporters also wanted to attract social and economically conservative families to the small farm homes—workers who wouldn’t agitate at factories but make their mortgage payments on time; retired middleclass Midwesterners who would bring their savings to the city; and people who would generally support their right-wing pro business politics (Laslett 2012).

Ironically, urban homesteaders were not necessarily upwardly mobile, white, Christian homeowners, but were often the destitute arriving in Los Angeles as a last resort. The Chamber was woefully aware of this point, as agenda item 3 above suggests, but it did little to change the reality of economic conditions for LA workers. In her work of the construction of working class suburbs in Los Angeles Becky Nicolaides found that even without the necessary guidance of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, many immigrants to the city built their own homes and grew much of their own food. Some even had surpluses—often of eggs and rabbits to sell or trade—but much of this self provisioning was done out of desperation (Nicolaides 2001; 2002). Wages were so low in the open-shop factories and work places of Los Angeles that the only food and shelter that industrial workers could find was that which they produced themselves. Nicolaides suggests that industrialists in Los Angeles were more than happy with this arrangement and we can see how a movement like the Small Farm Home helps reproduce the perception

that an industrial worker in LA not expect livable wages, but the privilege of self sustenance for their own families (see also Quam-Wickham 2001).

At the same time, the huge influxes of people into Los Angeles in the decade before, during and after World War II, meant the city and county doubled several times over. If you were in the business of selling houses, or in the rapidly expanding trade of “community building,” selling more houses in the same amount of area was good business. So there was no longer a need for the small agriculture: wages had gone up, people could buy food; and there was not a cultural investment in gardening in the same way—growing fruits and vegetables and small livestock became associated with poverty and backwardness—LA and its new freeways, aerospace and leisure culture were quickly becoming the city of the future.

Los Angeles scholars Barraclough (2011), Lipsitz (2006) McGirr (2001), and Nicholaides (2002) amongst others, have shown that in the Post War Era the value of homes shifted dramatically to their function as stores of wealth, which had already become inseparable from de facto and de jure racist understandings of how homes were valued. Supported by federal housing policy (c.f. Freund 2010), this function as a store of wealth, what Lipsitz has called a “possessive investment in whiteness” (2006), and the fierce actions whites took to defend it, increasingly overshadowed any productive uses Angelenos once imagined for their yards. Beyond racist housing policies, American food culture was also changing. Working class Americans had the ability to afford more and varied food at a supermarket. The postwar boom meant an end to days of wages so low that self-provisioning was the only option. In that era, industrial food processing increased massively, as did supermarkets, driving down prices for food overall (Walker 2004). The days of Depression wagelessness were obscured by the mass suburban landscape, but, as the next section shows, backyard gardens were not the only landscape to disappear.

“We are only here for love, peace, happiness, and a little food in these distressin' times”: The Cooperative Exchange Movement in Los Angeles^{xi}

But carrots, carrots, carrots,
Are nine-tenths of all you eat,
Your 'inners' get to hank'ring
For a good old chunk of meat.
So I can't refrain from lifting,
This prayer to God on high,
'Grant me one more leg of chicken
On my plate before I die.'

The "Carrot Pullers Prayer" by Helen McFarland, Los Angeles
County Council of the U.C.R.A. News Bulletin, May 12, 1933 (cited in Kerr 1933, 224)

Membership has been open to anyone since 'a democrat can be as hungry as a communist, a painter as naked as an engineer and a negro can have as little over his head as a white American.'

(cited in Kerr 1933, x)

In the spring of 1932, the Great Depression was at one of its lowest points. In Los Angeles, major industries had shuttered or cut back significantly on hours; families displaced by the Dust Bowl and the effects of the depression on Eastern Cities were flooding Southern California and its already stretched relief roles; the first trickle of relief from Roosevelt's New Deal programs was still at least a year away. Major William "Shorty" Burchfield was living in Compton, California, a white working class suburb approximately 10 miles south of downtown Los Angeles. He was a veteran of the Spanish-American war, disabled, out of work and hungry – much like tens of thousands of other Angelenos. So he walked out his front door and onto a nearby truck farm where he offered to barter some work for a bit of the produce that couldn't be sold that day. As the story was repeated, he came back with too much to eat and shared with other friends in need. The next day, they returned with him to the farm and took home an even larger haul. Another veteran offered the use of his truck, some gas money and a storage space so the barterers might have somewhere to store their truck before doling out the surplus to those in need. And thus was born the Compton Unit #1 of the Unemployed Cooperative Relief Association (UCRA). There had been similar efforts at barter and cooperative exchange early on in the depression in California, but none took hold with the tenacity of the UCRA.^{xii}

By the late 1920s, Los Angeles was already experiencing a locally centered economic distress in the face of declining agricultural prices and the ever volatile oil market (Viehe 1981; Abu-Lughod 2000, 237; Sabin 2005). Worse for Los Angeles, the housing bubble that had fueled the city from 1921-1924 fizzled hard (though not as badly as the 1887 crash). The city had seen building permits jump from \$28,000,000 in 1921 to \$200,000,000 in 1923 as a hundred thousand people a year arrived. But by 1924 the market and its grossly inflated speculative values began to cool significantly (Robinson 1942, 25). And *then* the Great Depression set in. The Depression brought many different struggles for the inhabitants of Los Angeles, including a severe disruption of its agricultural sector. Farms continued to produce surpluses, but their urban customers could no longer afford to purchase products. As with World War I, efforts were made to encourage back yard and community gardens. The Chamber of Commerce and others continued to tout the "small farm home" as a means of weathering the times, but no amount of individual self-provisioning was sufficient to feed the increasingly hungry citizens of Los Angeles.^{xiii} Men and women like Major Burchfield could see no signs of imminent re-employment in Los Angeles's industrial sector, but they could see fields filled with rotting vegetables. Unemployment and surplus were inexplicably all around, visible in the city, everywhere suggesting something *else* had to be done.

When Burchfield informally organized the first group of hungry veterans to barter their labor for surplus vegetables, he set off a chain reaction of similar organizing efforts. His unit became the first chapter of the Cooperative Relief Association in Compton, and within weeks similar chapters had been organized across South Los Angeles. The growth of the movement in Los Angeles itself reveals a great deal about the existing agricultural spaces of the city, and how they came to

be once again hailed as essential during the moment of crisis. The earliest units popped up in similar suburban areas like Southgate, Huntington Park, Lynwood and Maywood. These were not the leafy green suburbs the upper middle class, nor the magnificent craftsman homes of Pasadena's orange barons, but the working class developments that ran along Los Angeles's "Shoestring Addition" from Downtown to the Port. Some were comprised of the self-built homes of industrial workers, while others were early prototypes of the larger-scale, developer driven War/Post-War era booms in worker housing that would come to dominate Los Angeles's sprawling landscape (Hise 1997; Sitton and Deverell 2001). In all cases, they were the housing stock that had followed industrial suburbanization of the 1920s (Walker and Lewis 2004). Homes and large-scale industrial plants were built atop and adjacent to thousands of acres of agricultural land. That is, urban and suburbanization development did not flow out in a gradient from downtown, but popped up like dandelions in fields every direction out from the city center (see map above). So it was no surprise that, at first, the cooperative relief movement would form around the interstitial urban spaces where housing, work and farms met.

The view from industrial suburbs toward verdant fields must have felt particularly cruel to the unemployed and hungry. By 1932, the amount of surplus agricultural product going to waste was staggering. Estimates were that over 1.5 million crates of cantaloupes, 220,000 bunches of apples, 161,000 tons of peaches, half a million bunches of onions, and 277,000 crates of celery went to waste that year in Los Angeles (Kerr 1933). The Milk Arbitration board was recording somewhere between ten and fifteen *thousand* gallons of milk being poured into LA sewers every day in 1933 (Kerr 1933, 10). The hungry residents of Los Angeles were well aware of the spoilage, and the preposterousness of the crises of overproduction was noted with both anger and sarcasm. As in one satirical pamphlet from the era:

THEN AND NOW

6932 B.C.

BOWMEN - We've shot more meat than we can eat.

WOODSMEN - We've gathered more wood than we can burn.

SQUAWS - We've more blankets than we can wear.

TEEPEE SETTERS - We've set more teepees than we have need for.

IN UNISON - Whoopie! Let's eat, drink, love, snooze and make merry until we need more

1933 A.D.

FARMER - I raised more food than folks can eat.

MINER - I dug more coal than folks can burn.

TAILOR - I sewed more clothes than folks have need for.

CARPENTER - I built more homes than folks have need for.

IN UNISON - Come on everybody, let's starve, freeze, go naked and homeless together.

"The Optimist," 1933

The pamphlet reveals just how perplexing the crises felt to the hungry and homeless in Los Angeles.^{xiv} Unlike the dust swept plains that many had escaped from, the city

of Los Angeles seemed to still be teeming with plenty—the question was how to get it?

It was in this milieu that the Cooperative Exchange Relief chapters took hold. The movement grew through word of mouth at first, but quickly garnered support from local and regional governments, businesses and business organizations, and newspapers and other media. I will return to the complicated politics of this wide ranging (but limited) support in a moment; for the time being I simply want to emphasize that what began as small group of veterans in Compton exploded into a statewide movement in a matter of months. Bartering cooperatives were established up and down California, in both rural and urban parts of the state. They were fundamentally organized around provisioning food, but often grew into providing other life necessities like clothing, shelter and some care services like barbers, dentists and doctors. In rural areas, cooperatives were established as actual camps, operating businesses such as sawmills. The Bay Area saw its own flourishing of cooperatives, with Oakland and Alameda serving as organizing hubs for the whole state.^{xv} While the San Francisco chapter dissolved relatively quickly amongst internal political bickering and a general lack of access to agricultural spaces. In Los Angeles, over 75,000 families came to rely on the peri-urban farms and gardens, as well as everything from cooperative organized bakeries, barbers and social spaces, to make life livable at the height of the Depression.

Based on Kerr's writings and the documents he preserved, the organization as a whole had a surprising commitment to racial equality—in stark contrast to the explicitly racist programs of the subsistence homesteaders. A proto-anti-racist mantra of the movement appears in different forms with some regularity in UCRA documents: "We are all unemployed working together to feed, clothe, and house ourselves and we realized that Catholics can be as hungry as Jews, Negroes as naked as Mexicans and carpenters can have as little over their heads as fishermen." The statewide convention insisted that every participant be given a single vote, regardless of race, ethnicity or creed. When a member stood up and made racist comments towards Filipinos and Chinese at a statewide conference held in Los Angeles, the members asked the comments be stricken from the record. In both the primary documents and Kerr's report, the UCRA went out of its way to report the racial harmony it was supporting—especially between Japanese and Japanese American farmers and whites—in their movement (Kerr 1933, 207). Though, as Flamming has noted, overtures to racial equality were often as much of a product of Los Angeles's "reconstruction-era" Republican politics as any more progressive anti-racist political agenda (2005).

So while Kerr was cautiously optimistic about the movement, and many of its leaders may have had good intentions by 1930s standards, the reality on the ground was much less even. The units were in most cases segregated *de facto*. This was in part a result of the racial segregation of Los Angeles as whole, as much as any preconceived notions of keeping units themselves segregated. Because the units were geographically organized, their make-up reflected the concentrations of whites into exclusively white neighborhoods, with some occasional mixing of ethnic groups.

Using the racial categories of the period, Kerr reported the following composition of units:

All white Americans.....	86
White Americans and Mexicans.....	11
All Mexicans.....	3
All Jewish.....	2
Negroes and Mexicans.....	2
All Negroes.....	1
Italians, Mexicans and Negroes.....	1
All Italians.....	1
White Americans, Negroes, Mexicans and Japanese..	1

So while the statewide organization may have given each member a vote regardless of his or her race or creed, the UCRA was an overwhelmingly white organization in Los Angeles. Moreover, units had differential experiences in terms of access to resources. For example, the one all black unit was not engaged directly in trade for food, but was asked to barter entertainment for the other units in exchange for their share of the surpluses. "The negro unit largely solved this difficulty by trading its musical and other talent for the entertainment of other cooperatives in exchange for food" (Kerr 1933, 207). This may have been seen as engaging the musical skills of that particular unit, but acts as a reminder that the racialized differences of the units had their effects on the work that was done.

One racialized relationship that was undeniably complicated by the UCRA was between white workers and Japanese-American truck farmers. Since the exclusion of Chinese immigrants in 1882, Japanese immigrants had gone from being replacement immigrant laborers to buying and leasing agricultural land. On small farms (2-3 acres) they grew a variety of vegetable crops and strawberries, especially in the South Bay region of the county (cf. Sato 2009, 65). By 1940, Japanese American growers controlled 90% of the truck crops in Los Angeles, on 26045 acres (McWilliams 1973, 321). White citizens and growers were deeply suspicious if not outright violent towards their emerging dominance in the sector. As Kurashige notes, by the 1920s the *Los Angeles Times* was publishing editorials to the effect that "Issei 'control of California farm lands' was 'endangering white supremacy in California and threatening to overwhelm the Caucasian race'" (2010, 24). By contrast, Kerr argues that the relationship under the cooperative exchanges was, on the whole positive, giving whites a chance to overcome some of their prejudices about Japanese growers. At the same, as the following anecdote reproduced in a promotional pamphlet suggests, the relationship from the white perspective was still quite paternalistic:

A foreman and detail of men were weeding onions for a Japanese farmer in exchange for five acres of carrots; the foreman noticed that the Jap's barn was in very bad condition; he reported this fact to the Construction Department. The Construction foreman surveyed the premises and sent out the necessary contact men and procured lumber, etc., and then took a crew of men and repaired not only the barn, but the house porch, fence, etc. It so

happened that the Jap and his family were in town trying to sell some produce, when he returned home and saw what had been done, he asked the foreman "Who fix up my barn, my place", the foreman told him the Veterans fixed it up; he said, "What for they fix up everything", and the foreman replied "Oh! They fraid barn fall down and hurt poor cow." Soon it dawned on the Jap that this was done without any expectation of any compensation; he seemed dazed for a few moments, then sat down on the porch and cried; it seemed so hard to realize that there were still men in the world who ceased to look for the dollar every time they did someone a good turn.

(unsigned 1932)

In relation to their Japanese benefactors, white UCRA members could still see themselves in a western, supremacist, and civilizing role. As in the anecdote above, in this mindset, white workers had a responsibility to show the Japanese that even amongst the strife of the Great Depression, the inherent goodness and ingenuity of hard working white men would persevere. In this way, the UCRA could maintain a mythos of "self-help," while simultaneously obfuscating that members were almost completely dependent on Japanese American growers to keep themselves from starving.

The uneven racial and ethnic arrangements of the UCRA were further complicated by the wide range of political agendas that undergirded the movement. In their study of the cooperative units, Kerr and Taylor laid out a rough typology for how various chapters had developed:

1. The development of democratically organized and operated cooperatives endeavoring to produce as well as to exchange.
2. The development of a militant, semi-radical movement somewhat confused by cross-currents of state and local politics, built upon loosely federated units of diverse types.
3. The Development of an American Nazi-ism, with members of the cooperatives serving as potential storm troopers.
4. The drawing of an issue between cooperatives and established social agencies as channels for distribution of relief to able-bodied unemployed.
5. The appearance of cooperative buying in various forms, ranging from centralized purchasing of staples with government funds to polling of pay from CWA, intermittent or even steady jobs, to buy milk, bread and staples.

(Taylor and Kerr 1934, 329)

As Martin argues, Kerr and Taylor very much had their own agendas in the face of a contradictorily conservative cooperative movement (2013). Left leaning, but questioning of radical groups, Kerr and Taylor clearly had a preference towards the first type of organization. They lamented the second, fourth and fifth type of groups, as they saw them as undermining the democratic potential of the movement. They

worried that the movement would be pulled towards being a mainstream political organization, on the one side, or simply devolved into a top down charity organization meant to bolster long standing capitalist relations, on the other. The third development, perhaps the most distressing to them, was not hyperbole by any stretch. They recount the leader of one unit in South LA using the organization specifically as an anti-communist, nearly fascist organization, “We used to have a unit that let communists meet there. [...] We told them they couldn’t stay in town; we would drive them out. We said we’d start a brush fire on one side of town and send the firemen and policemen there, then we’d drive them out the other side. They meet outside now. It isn’t necessary for the police to strong-arm the reds here; the people know they can leave things to us” (cited in Taylor and Kerr 1934, 348–349). Los Angeles has a long history of being notoriously and violently anti-union and anti-radical (Davis 2001), and there was nothing inherently progressive about the cooperative exchanges that would have prevented them from playing directly into that history (Laslett 2012, 116–118).

As with the racial divisions in the units, the political commitments of each unit made for a more uneven movement than might be immediately visible. Some chapters championed a basic right to life in the city, which gave them the impetus to barter for food and supplies, but also the wherewithal to physically block evictions and attempts to shut off water or gas at the homes of their members. At the same time, many of the organizations were highly nationalistic and anti-radical. The UCRA produced a pamphlet at the height of the movement titled “Starvation in the Midst of Plenty,” written by one of the members of the original unit in Compton. The pamphlet was designed to succinctly lay out an argument for why the movement ought to be supported, had already being successful, and did not present any threat to the social order of the United States. This last point, emphasized throughout the pamphlet, reveals the complicated politics of the movement that were communitarian and non-capitalist (if not anti-capitalist) in practice, but individualist and nationalist in ideology. In this milieu, the cooperative exchange movement came to occupy a strange territory that its leaders suggested helped to temper radicalism by providing support to the most needy, while keeping them busy and defusing their most radical agendas. Indeed, as the pamphlet recounts in detail, some units were proud of luring “soap box orators” into the movement and giving them “real” work to do, thus preoccupying them with the task at hand and showing to their potential radical allies that the real work to be done was in building the economy, not overthrowing the government or capitalist class (Starvation in the Midst of Plenty 1932, 10–20). In the place of an inherent class war, the authors relied on a more synergistic understanding of the dialectical relationship between labor and capital, “as capital has always needed labor, so labor needs capital, and the cementing together of all stratification of Humanity, all thinking along constructive lives, is believed to be the best cure of present conditions”(unsigned 1932, 10).

The anti-radical sentiments of the UCRA drew it both praise and scorn. It received much support from organizations like the notoriously conservative *Los Angeles Times*, while being heavily criticized by the labor movement. The *Los Angeles Times* praised the movement for stemming the tide of radicalism through

its “self-help” focus, while simultaneously being a pro-business movement. Labor leaders, by contrast, complained that the movement was helping to lower wages—especially organizations that were issuing their own scrip—and prop up business owners’ falling profits on the backs of workers. Moreover, they found the organizations distracted from larger structural issues they were trying to organize around, particularly the growing push for a social insurance program. In the more radical literature, the movement was decried as a “return to medievalism” (Heldermann 1933). Similar criticism arose from within the movement as well, though likely from labor-radicals who were participating in various units. As the following letter from a woman member of the UCRA lays out, many activists shared serious concerns that the cooperative movement would only act to keep citizens alive, and barely at that, but failed to support the quality of life that American workers had fought so hard to attain:

Mr. Chairman and delegates:

After nine months of earnest and open minded labor in this movement of the Unemployed for the Unemployed, I have arrived at the interesting conclusion that the whole movement represent nothing more nor less than a large and animated human stomach that, in the process of being what it is, has obscured and atrophied the brain.

Food, clothing, housing--Slogan of the Unemployed--God knows we need these things, in a land of plenty where people cry for bread; but are not losing sight of the greater thing that is being subtly taken from us? In this fantastic campaign for bread--what of Standard of living that has taken us generations to win and which is now under cover of food being gently pried from us.

For nine months I have sat in the meetings of the Unemployed and in that time attended and reported two conventions, and not once have I heard mentioned our disappearing STANDARD OF LIVING, the very thing-- greater than bread alone--that the American working man has fought generations to attain.

For nine months I have studied the faces and general reactions of the people who gather at the Unit meetings and who receive their mede of charity from the Social Service boards and from our commissariats for as little actual return as is possible to get away with; and I find them, not content nor yet militant, but --- apathetic. THOUGHT is of today and tomorrow is merely tomorrow.

Is it possible that these people, as a majority, think that they will have tomorrow what they have today, or had yesterday? And what is the matter with our leaders that this is never spoken of?

To me there seems to be a well cloaked movement afoot that we, as a whole, have not as yet become conscious of; and the sooner we do become conscious of it the better for us if we would retain for ourselves and our children what has taken ages of class struggle to arrive at: our STANDARD OF LIVING.

Consider the words of some wise sage; "If you have two loaves of bread, sell

one and buy white hyacinths--bread nourishes the body, but white hyacinths delight the soul."

Think it over, and WAKE UP.

Fraternally Yours,
Mrs Frances Knoese

As the letter suggests, there are limitations to the agrarian imagination for an urban working class. Certainly, second hand vegetables and a few home-grown fruits or eggs were better than starvation (and we should not forget that starvation was on the table for many Americans in the early 1930s), but as a permanent condition of existence, it looked none too appealing. In this sense, drawing on Los Angeles's agrarian landscape worked only to survive the crisis, but failed to offer up any serious alternative futures for the city.

Ultimately, the New Deal and internal political divisions put an end to any longevity that the URCA may have had in Los Angeles (Martin 2013) . As the recovery and alphabet soup organizations sent Angelenos back to work for wages, and not insignificantly, began to provide employment for the dust bowl refugees who had flooded southern California, the need for the UCRA faded. At the same time, as both its originators and Clark Kerr noted, the movement had never really meant to be a long-term arrangement. The most nationalistic members of the units quite baldly touted the organization as a temporary arrangement to keep everyone alive until business as usual could be resumed in the city. And while the more radical members of the units dreamed of a new society where workers traded goods and services amongst themselves without the exploitation of capital, their Left vision was no match for the lure of higher wages and New Deal employment over the pangs of poverty that had dominated the experience of the cooperative members. Simultaneously, as conditions began to improve in Los Angeles, the ramp up to the Second World War sparked a boom that would last into the post-war years. With it came rapid suburbanization to meet the needs of new industries and their workers, which all but erased the agrarian landscape of Los Angeles. Yet amongst the ticky-tacky boxes, suburban lawns, and industrial sprawl, the promise of Los Angeles's green fields remained an important, if dormant, dimension of the city.

Paradise Lost?

By the late 1930s the writing was already on the wall that Los Angeles's relationship with agriculture and gardening was about to undergo a major transition. The State and civic organizations continued to support the significance of gardens and farms to individual identities in the city, but markedly with a narrowed emphasis on middle and upper class aesthetics and boutique business ventures. Starting in 1938, and continuing for three years, the Department of Water and Power mailed a small booklet with customer's monthly bill entitled "Your Garden" with advice on starting and maintaining home gardens. The recipients

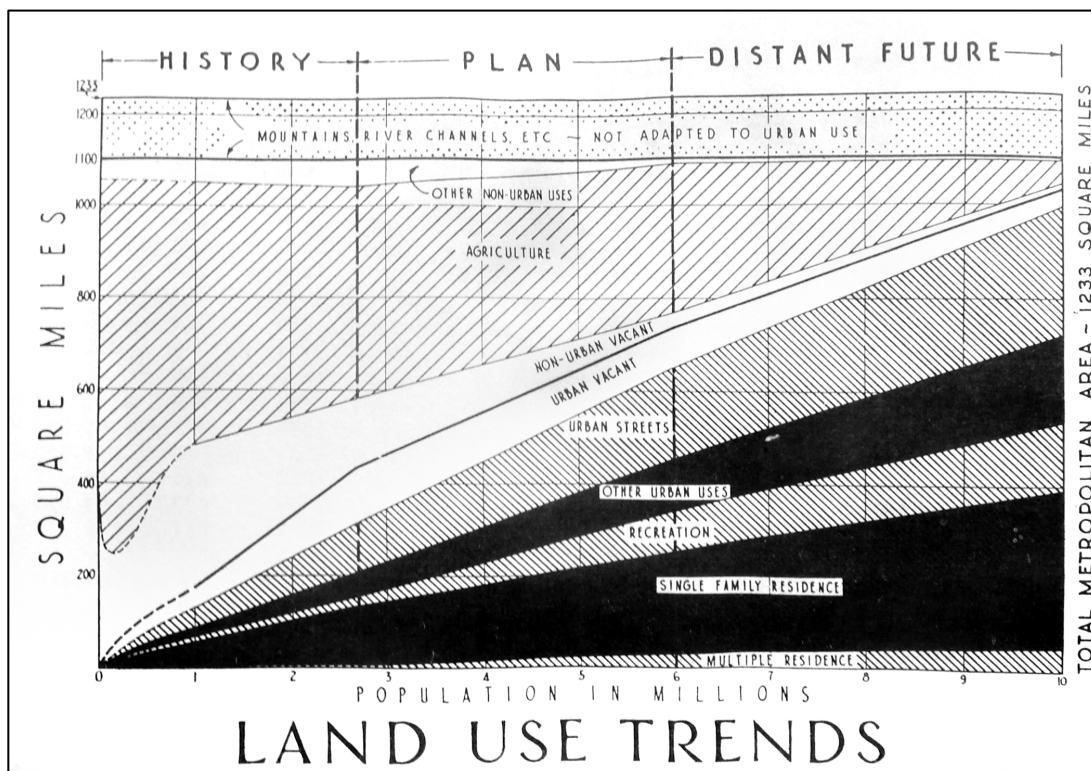
were presumed to be a homeowner with a DWP account to receive the brochure. The flyers contained the best contemporary advice on fighting pests (i.e. which poisons to buy), building good soil, which plants to plant when, and budgeting advice. They were also filled with regular tributes to the patron saint of the Department of Water and Power and all Southern California agriculturalists, William Mulholland . The program included a great deal of advice on fruit and vegetables, but was a far cry from the “subsistence” plans advocated by earlier LA gardeners. The guide was more likely to run articles on how to use your yard as an outdoor living room, now the quintessential idea of a yard (Grampp 2008). Similar articles were appearing in the *Los Angeles Times* new “Home and Garden” section. Gardens as a bourgeois pastime and marker of privileged Southern California lifestyle have been an omnipresent practice in Los Angeles across the decades. Indeed, the “Your Garden” supplements suggest that this form of urban agriculture is often what persists in the city, even as enthusiasm for cross-class and more radical forms of gardening swells and fades over time.

Meanwhile, the Chamber of Commerce continued to publish its “What the Newcomer Should Know...” guides, but with a shift away from the small farm home to topics like “poultry raising” and “cut flowers.” Such titles would be published up until the 1950s and, unlike the small farm home materials, did not espouse a hybrid agrarian-industrial lifestyle for the newcomer to the city, but rather suggested that a man with the right know how and access to enough capital could make a lucrative living in specialty agricultural markets. One 1940 pamphlet suggested that because of the good roads and agricultural technology available in Southern California, farming would be a leisurely and profitable enterprise (“What the Newcomer Should Know,” 1940). While others admonished the enterprising poultry man to expect to invest \$10,000-12,000 up front to start an egg business with a necessary 2-3 thousand hens to make a profit. Similar pamphlets on cut flowers suggested there was a lucrative market to be exploited.^{xvi} Again, these did not come as a significant departure from the type of promotions that had been happening in Los Angeles for a century, but the replacement of the “small farm home” literature with explicitly commercial proposals marked the end of a period of romantic notions of the hybrid agrarian-urban citizen. For all of its shortcomings and hypocritical promises, it is worth considering what was lost between the transition from the myth that an Angeleno could build a house with a small farm attached and live a comfortable life and the more stereotypical suburban fantasy of the post-war era. Both drew on deeply problematic racial assumptions (see discussion of Barraclough above on “Rural-Urbanism” and the “possessive investment in whiteness”), but the more agrarian myths at the very least contained kernels of a de-alienated labor, of alternative economic systems and urban forms. The kernels, will of course sprout again during the contemporary moment, which the rest of this dissertation focuses on.

Los Angeles’s changing relationship to agriculture was more than changing opinions about what an agrarian identity might be in the city. By the early 1940s, city planners were already beginning to note with alarm that much of the county’s

formerly agricultural land was being torn up and subdivided into tracts for housing and industry. In planner Mel Scott's strange and fascinating tract on the importance of planning in Los Angeles, "Cities are for People" (which is both a history of the city and an explanation of the role of city planners in it), he opines that even with an estimated population of 6 million by the end of the century, Los Angeles could perhaps preserve up to 400 square miles of agricultural land, if zoned properly (1942, 38). Other reports showed growing concern about the economic impact declining agriculture might have on the region. In one, extension agents expressed their worry about what might be done with all of the trash in Los Angeles that for decades had been sold to local hog farms as feed (Los Angeles County Farm and Home Advisors 1954). By the end of World War II, planners still maintained some hope that pieces of the San Fernando Valley might be preserved for productive agriculture, although the tone had certainly shifted from the pre-war alarm to one of quite resignation that the urban would soon dominate any agrarian uses in the city. As a 1958 report put out the Agriculture Division of the Chamber of Commerce stated, "Agriculture in the Los Angeles Area is clearly undergoing a major transition. The change is from rural to urban, from country to city, from agriculture to industry, from 'barn to skyscraper.' That change is occurring is obvious to all. The nature, extent, rapidity, consequences, and end results are less obvious" (White and Bream 1958).

Figure 8: Predicted Land Use Trends



source: Los Angeles Regional Planning Commission, 1941

Though the landscape was changing quickly in Los Angeles, agriculture lingered in both the economy and identity of the city.^{xvii} The real profits to be made in agriculture lay mostly outside of LA county, in the Imperial and Central valleys, and small-scale production had so given way to urban development to the point where the Chamber of Commerce stopped promoting them altogether by the early 60s. Other large institutions adapted more slowly. The Los Angeles Unified School district continued to run *vocational* agricultural programs until at least the early 1960s. They were mostly in the city's urban-rural edge, particularly in the San Fernando Valley, but suggested the unease with which the City was transitioning to a fully "urban" place.

In 1959, the LAUSD published a new instructional guide titled "Small Farms." The guide was not part of their former vocational program, but of a grade school social studies curriculum —geography, history and civics. The guide makes no assumption that students will go on to be farmers themselves. It explicitly states in the introduction that "since the child living in an urban area has limited opportunity to learn about farm life directly, experiences are provided [...] to further his understanding of the importance of the farmer to his community" (Martucci 1959, xi). Los Angeles was being fully subsumed to an industrial-capitalist form of urbanism. Most American cities had long ago made this economic and ideological adjustment. But it was the dying gasps of Los Angeles's myth of a greener, more gentele frontier capitalist city that was ironically consumed by the suburbs. Gone were the promises of Small Farm Homes or a city feeding itself, here was the new American food system. Perhaps most telling are the acknowledgements from the curriculum: The Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce (Agricultural Department), National Cannery Association, Ferry-Morse Seed Company, the Supervisor of Livestock and Agriculture for Union Pacific Railroad, Agricultural Council of California, as well as farmers, farm advisors and representatives from the University of California, CalTech, Department of Water and Power, and the City and County of Los Angeles. Agencies that had once sought to combine agriculture and urbanism and the corporate food interests that had once profited greatly from that vision are here endorsing the reality that the city and the industrial food system had become two separate —though always connected—spaces.

John Anson Ford bookends his 1960 memoir of his time as a county supervisor from 1934 to 1958 by asking whether Los Angeles "shall be big, or shall it be great?" He was looking back with a mixture of pride and apprehension on a thirty-year period of unbridled growth that rocketed Los Angeles to a region of 6 million residents. He had seen the region grow through a mixture of agrarian, residential and industrial uses into the metropolitan form that we recognize (though no one can quite describe accurately) today. Under his watch, Los Angeles saw the first smog attack (September 8th, 1943), the first freeways open, the rise of the aerospace industry, as well as the solidifying of Hollywood as the dominant industrial center for American popular media. Los Angeles had grown into its bifurcated identity of fast cars, beaches, Hollywood stars and sprawling, smog filled, soulless, cultureless wasteland. It had become the city where people with chickens in their yards and a quarter acre of vegetables were markedly out of place; where

“stock” most definitely referred to the financial variety; where “country” and “hillbilly ways” were the stuff of slapstick humor. It is against this backdrop that the rest of the dissertation takes place in the present moment – where chickens in the yard and home pickling are once again not only en vogue, but extremely hip and deeply politically contentious—the promise of an agrarian city is once again just over the horizon in Los Angeles’s future.

iv See for example Mike Davis’s “How Eden Lost It’s Garden” (1998) which goes much further than most critiques of LA’s insidious growth, but still treats farms, orchards and gardens as more of a backdrop than center stage.

v During the period of time that the US population doubled via growth and immigration, Los Angeles went from a city of just over 100,000 in 1900 to nearly 2 million by 1950.

vi Walker has shown how a similar geography developed earlier in the San Francisco Bay Area, with agriculture growing around the city of San Francisco in the years following the gold rush, concentrating the high value specialty crops closest to the city and acreage-intensive crops like wheat farther afield (Walker 2009, 37–39).

vii To this day one of the most trenchant critiques of suburbanization around the world is its tendency to pave over and destroy some of the most fertile arable land in any given region.

viii In one particular case a neighbor objected to highschool boys planting potatoes in an unused triangle made by 3 streets. The city council agreed to let the boys continue to use the plot, but the incident is indicative of the banal but significant hurdle that has been an ongoing struggle for urban agriculture: unhappy neighbors. Both recently and in the past, one of the major impetuses for garden projects being thwarted or heavily regulated has not been the state’s heavy policing of gardeners, but neighbors asking the city government to step in on their behalf against projects they find unpleasant for whatever reasons.

ix The DSH was created as part of the National Industrial Recovery Act in 1933, but only with temporary funding. By 1935 it had been absorbed into the Resettlement Administration (Carriker 2010, 3)

x Rexford Tugwell, the controversial director of the Resettlement Administration was not a fan of the subsistence homestead plans and when the properties were transferred to the RA in 1935, he began the process of liquidating the properties to private homestead associations. Tugwell was forced to step down in 1936 and the RA was transferred to the Farm Security Administration, where the process continued. The program was increasingly politically unpopular and Congress forced the transfer of remaining property to the Federal Public Housing Authority in 1942 where they were effectively defunded (Carriker 2010, 32–35)

xi “This attitude of distrust was well expressed by one sincere negro manager, “We knows there is political doin’s and we don’t know the foundations of your questions and we are only here for love, peace, happiness, and a little food in these distressin’ times”.” (Kerr 1933, iv)

xii There was, for example, a “Land Chest Plan” in which charity organizations were granted access to vacant land for gardening. As with the Home Garden Council during WWI, funds were raised to supply water, seed, and advice.

According to Taylor, the “Back to the land” movement progressed farthest in Long Beach, where the local city welfare department was operating forty acres in March 1933. The Community Chest had four thousand acres under cultivation.

xiii There was, for example, a "Land Chest Plan" in which charity organizations were granted access to vacant land for gardening. As with the Home Garden Council during WWI, funds were raised to supply water, seed, and advice.

According to Taylor, the "Back to the land" movement progressed farthest in Long Beach, where the local city welfare department was operating forty acres in March 1933. The Community Chest had four thousand acres under cultivation.

xiv The essentializing racism present in the pamphlet is endemic to both historical and cotemporary literature on alternative food systems. Native Americans and indigenous peoples from around the world are constantly cast as having a more normalized and natural relationship to nature, food, labor.

xv That the UCRA flourished in the Bay Area is significant because it brought the movement to the attention of a UC Berkeley labor economist Paul Taylor and his graduate student Clark Kerr, who collected extraordinarily detailed records of the movement. Taylor would, over the next decade, become one of the most important documenters and advocates on behalf of the dispossessed) of the Great Depression in California, along with his (arguably more famous) photographer wife Dorothea Lange. Clark Kerr would go on to be the president of the University of California and the mastermind behind California's Master Plan for higher education. But in 1932 for his master's thesis, he fell into a surprisingly mixed-methods research project that both collected a large amount of statistical information on the growth and diversity of the UCRA and ethnographic data on the movement. In his introduction to his thesis he wrote, "Every effort was made by the writer to share in the life of the movement by becoming a member of four units, aiding in the opposition of evictions, working with the men in the fields, visiting the members in their homes and partaking of the rancid butter, bacon rinds and liberal seasoning of "barter meals" in communal kitchens." Along with an archive of primary documents he preserved and a few booster-ish newspaper articles, these are the only records we have of a movement that drew in tens of thousands of Californians at the height of the great depression.

xvi Without any sense of remorse, the Chamber reported the number of competitors in the market had been cut in half by the internment of Japanese farmers, so the opportunities abounded.

xvii To this day some of California's agribusiness giants call Los Angeles home, though their investments in agriculture lay elsewhere. Families like the Resnicks, who control the largest pistachio and pomegranate operations in the world (along with billions in almonds and other diversified holdings), continue to invest in an agrarian identity for Los Angeles. Last year they donated \$4 million to the University of California Los Angeles for a new agricultural law center, and have advised the Los Angeles Food Policy Council.

Chapter 2: Welcome to the New Garden City

How can we possibly read—or even keep count of—all the books published in the past few years in praise of the garden! Not every one is a picture book; there are small pocket-sized anthologies of garden-verse, and collections of letters, and intimate glimpses of gardens in other parts of the world and at other times. There are ecological treatises, and eloquent accounts of what gardening means to modern man. There are calendars of gardens, handbooks on gardening, TV programs on how to plant a garden, and guided tours of private gardens. In the supermarket—the garden’s modern day successor at least in terms of produce—we can buy garden magazines and tapes of seeds with directions on how to make a garden of our own. If anything, there is too much garden literature available; it is often repetitious, has too much to say about the spiritual benefits of gardening, contains too many art photographs of flowers, too many italicized quotations from Thoreau. But still, as enthusiasms go, it would be hard to find one more innocent, more generous, more appealing than this contemporary love of the garden.

(J. B. Jackson *The Necessity for Ruins*, p.19, 1980)

During the last days of winter it becomes blazingly clear how Los Angeles lured so many tourists and transplants to its streets during the 20th century. While the Midwest and East Coasts wonder how many more weeks the slushy ice and gray skies can last, Angelenos don sunglasses and head out to any one of literally dozens of farmers markets to browse a cornucopia of fresh, locally sourced fruits, vegetables, baked goods, meats and cheeses. It is the kind of image that smacks of the worst sort of Southern California boosterism, but that makes it no less a reality in modern day Los Angeles. It was on such a day in early 2010 that I wandered into the Hollywood Farmers Market, one of the region’s two flagship markets (along with the more famous Santa Monica Farmers Market), only to discover that something was palpably wrong. Vendors were talking in hushed tones about losing their stalls, petitions and e-mail lists were being passed around, and a somber air hung about the intersection of Ivar and Hollywood, casting a gray shadow over an otherwise sunny day. Rumors flew that the market was going to be shut down. Despite being immensely popular with residents, chefs, and the vendors (who make a rare and regular profit at the market), it seemed that at the any moment it could all very quickly disappear.

The vast conspiracy to destroy the Hollywood farmers market, turned out to be the nothing more than the Achilles heal of all Los Angeles politics: a dispute over parking. Since the day cars became popular in Los Angeles, the inalienable right to park one somewhere has been used by residents to justify shutting gardens, blocking developments, and as remarkably powerful lever in wresting control of urban spaces. The LA city council archives are filled with residents and businesses complaining about parking for nearly a century—from the Home Garden Council to

contemporary food swaps, neighbors complain that participants crowd their streets with cars in unacceptable ways and must be stopped—a banal but inescapable power that is wielded with some abandon in Los Angeles.

At the Hollywood Farmers Market, some of the markets neighbors were refusing to sign off on the conditional use permit for street closures unless the number of blocks closed off was reduced significantly. This would have meant a severe reduction in the number of vendors who could be at the market, and was tantamount to shutting the whole thing down altogether in many people's minds. Moreover, it was agreed, the market had been there since 1991, and moving it to another location in Hollywood—as some business community members suggested—would have been equally disastrous to the market. And it wasn't just the celebrity chefs in Hollywood who would suffer, went the argument, the remarkable profitability of the Hollywood Farmers Market was being used by the nonprofit that runs it to subsidize the less lucrative markets in other parts of the city, namely Watts, where they had a commitment to provide the same local and organic food, even if the profits were not as high. So what at first could have been a simple question of which blocks needed to be closed to allow the market quickly became a city-wide referendum on the significance of farmers markets and what Los Angeles's position would be on the 21st century city's new relationship to food and agriculture.

Ironically, the Hollywood Farmers Market has been arguably one of the more powerful catalysts in “rejuvenating” a disinvested area of Hollywood (at least in terms of bringing people back to the neighborhood) over the past decade. As bohemian interest in local food has grown, the market has been not only practical, but also one of the hipper places to see and be seen in Los Angeles. But with the rejuvenation of the neighborhood had come development. On a Sunday morning, what was once a largely unoccupied six square blocks now plays home to numerous restaurants, shops, and other businesses with non-bankers hours—not the least of which are tourist-oriented hotels, tours and other activities that bring crowds to Hollywood. Parking can be tight. The farmers market is only a block off of the major subway stop, but it is still Los Angeles after all and arriving by car is *de rigueur* for a huge number of people. Parking, in particular, was becoming a problem for the Los Angeles Film Academy, a private film school whose parking lot entrance shares a partially blocked street with the farmers market. As one of the businesses impacted by the regular street closure necessary for the operation of the market,^{xviii} their approval of a conditional use permit is required—and they were not going to sign. Even though the market did not block the entrance to the film school garage that is several yards up the same street as the market, shoppers and vendors regularly assumed that the street closure extended all the way down the street and inadvertently blocked vehicles attempting to leave or enter. It was annoying to the school and, though probably blown out of proportion, a serious safety hazard for market goers.

By the time it was all said and done, the fate of the market had become a major news story. Market supporters had run a very public campaign to save the market. The Film School, with hesitant backing from some corners of the Hollywood business community who were nervous about losing business themselves, brazenly

stood their ground. Ultimately, members of the Los Angeles City Council had to step into a series of closed door meetings and hash out a deal that made everyone happy—though from the outside it looked far more like the councilmen told the Film School that the market was going to stay no matter what, so they were just going to have to come to the table with a solution that was acceptable to them. The Hollywood market is still exactly where it was before the fight started, albeit with much clearer signage and staff on hand to keep the film school entrance unblocked. They have also arranged for relatively inexpensive parking at the massive parking structure that serves a movie megaplex and gym that goes largely unused on Sunday mornings. Meanwhile the market grows more popular and crowded by the week. The endless sunshine and gentrification of Hollywood bring more exotic vegetables and shoppers with disposable income to buy them every day.

This rather prosaic story of parking and the Hollywood Farmers Market actually brings together the various strands emerging from the contemporary food renaissance in Los Angeles that I mean to cover in the rest of this dissertation. Here we find renewed cultural affinities for “local” and “small-scale” food production colliding with the mundane but powerful realities of urban politics. The fight over the Farmers Market had almost nothing to do with the overall structures of the food system, but galvanized multiple foodie communities to come to its “rescue.” The fight was ultimately about how land in Los Angeles can and should be used. And, as is increasingly true across food-politics, it was fought across multiple terrains: in the space of the market itself, but also in the offices of the city council and through digital social media. Thus, I begin with the Hollywood Farmers market to suggest that the urban food renaissance is about so much more than just how or what people eat, but also how the urban experience is changing in the digital era and radically changing what urbanites’ expectations are of the city.

In this chapter I first want to convey how contemporary Los Angeles is once again in a moment where the city is being reimagined and remade through agrarian romanticism. The point in itself is interesting insofar as it explores the relationship between the present geography of the city and the historical geography. But I am interested in more than just the historiography of Los Angeles at this point, and mean to use the examples for a broader argument about how food and cities relate to each other. That is, I argue that critiques of the “urban food” or “alternative food” movements need refining around *urban* questions, rather than placing the emphasis so emphatically on *food system* questions. This brings me to three alternative readings of the contemporary alternative food movements in Los Angeles. First, I begin by suggesting they can be seen as a rather banal set of bourgeois taste and practices that ebb and flow in popularity through urban life at various times. Second, they represent a point of congealing around radical agendas in response to the latest configuration of capitalist cities. Third, and last, they represent a deeply reactionary and troubling set of agendas in response to the current configuration of capitalist cities. In the second and third cases, food politics are inseparable from the Neoliberal moment, but I want to emphasize throughout how much that term obfuscates the specificities of historical geographies that make a place. As will become clearer as I expand each of these cuts below, all three are in tension and, as

always, the outcomes of contingent processes are not yet on some pre-determined path. The purpose of this chapter is then to show how those tensions co-exist and pull at the situated practices of urban gardeners, farmers and foodies across a place like Los Angeles. And again, this is not solely because the food system is complex and broken (which it is), but because so many of the “foodies” who engage it are situated in cities and it is the urban experience (as much as its inseparable from the rural hinterlands) that shapes the dimensions of food movements.

Los Angeles as the New Garden City

The glory days of Los Angeles as an agricultural powerhouse are indisputably in the past, and mostly forgotten. At best, they are romanticized and selectively remembered by Angelenos of a certain age, who are quick to recall nostalgically their childhood memories of orange groves or strawberry fields nearby their suburban homes.^{xix} Surely, the kind of dreams of L.A. as an agrarian hybrid, recounted in Chapter One, are unknown to present-day urbanites. Nevertheless, the contemporary urban food movement calls upon the historical geography of the city from the misty past in order to build a new conception of Los Angeles as the a Garden City. The new Garden City is not a direct descendent of the ideologies and practices of the past, but a renaissance of an old idea configured to a new social and spatial order.

For semantic simplicity, throughout the dissertation I discuss the “food movement” and “foodies”, but in many ways both connote a broad set of overlapping movements, practices and attitudes that rarely if ever cohere into a single set of demands, goals or even ideology. I focus most specifically on those Angelenos who are interested in urban agriculture—gardening and farming of all sorts in the city—but there are plenty more people who are supportive of an alternative food system who are not necessarily engaging in gardening themselves—the “foodies” who frequent farmers markets, food swaps, food educational events, and very occasionally engage in food-politics directly. And these groups are by no means coherent within themselves. There are wealthy white gardeners and bakers in North Los Angeles and lower-income Black farmers in South Los Angeles who, in most socio-cultural economic terms, have little overlap. But a shared interest in food and gardening connects them in unexpected ways. There are middle-class Latino community gardeners in central Los Angeles who have developed close relationships with working-class white vegan activists from an inner ring suburb. The food movement is everywhere in the city and comprised of members of dozens of communities. One of the key questions of this dissertation involves moving past the presumption that the lines of difference and experience are so rigid that a collective project exists exclusively in the mind of well-intentioned white foodies, and asking, instead, where do different communities meet each other, find common ground and build a sense of collective urban-food identity in the city? At the same time, I want to avoid the Pollyannaish trope that food brings us all together and to highlight where communities are speaking past each other, failing to connect altogether, or, worst, falling back into positions of privilege and unexamined power

relations that ultimately undermine the possibility of real and lasting change in the urban food system.

The upside and downside to the widespread nature of the urban food renaissance in Los Angeles is that a single dissertation can only address the smallest slices of it. The renaissance is widespread across the region, with myriad motivations that range from addressing the environmental impacts of sprawl to the perceived obesity epidemic, from rebuilding local communities to jump starting a new regional economy. By way of example, the Hollywood Farmers Market is only one of dozens have opened in the last thirty years (the Santa Monica Farmers Market celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2011, as the “first” modern farmers market in Los Angeles). Activist community gardeners formed a community garden council in 1996. Since then, the council officially claims the opening of 138 new community gardens, though more are opening every year that are not even necessarily part of the council. In 2010 the Mayor of Los Angeles officially established a Los Angeles Food Policy Council (discussed further in chapter 3). There are plans underway for an official citywide regional food hub. The UC Agricultural extension, which once supported the dairymen and citrus farmers of Los Angeles, is more widely known in Los Angeles now for supporting a massive Master Gardener program.^{xx} Non-profits and community development organizations are throwing their resources into new food and gardening programs. By all official markers, food and agriculture are undergoing a significant resurgence of interest and support in Los Angeles.

By unofficial measures, the renaissance is ever larger and wider, but harder to pin down to a quantifiable set of practices. Untold thousands of Angelenos are starting new gardens and gardening projects in their yards.^{xxi} Loosely organized groups of “guerilla gardeners” and volunteer organizations dedicated to planting gardens (cf. Green Ground discussed further below) are springing up everywhere. There are now small companies that will even dig up your yard for you and plant and maintain an edible garden for you. It is not just gardening, people are organizing food preparation and preserving workshops, swaps, baking groups, community kitchens and various groups dedicated to all of the above.

The zeitgeist of urban life in Los Angeles is filled with the urban food renaissance. The mainstream and alternative media feature weekly stories about food and agriculture, home grown food celebrities (such as Jonathan Gold, the first food critic to win the Pulitzer prize) are increasingly common. Social media are saturated with links, photos and stories of food and agriculture (the subject of chapter 4). As will become clear in this and the following chapters, all of these different pieces, people and organizations are connected in expected and unexpected ways that give the urban food renaissance an aura of being somewhere between a social movement and cultural phenomenon. It seems to be both and neither at the same time as different actors connect and move through different communities, all loosely organized around food—developing new food systems, food-centric communities, garden-centric spaces, and so on—without any overarching goal or agenda.

The renaissance has, in most places, a visceral patina of newness and excitement that something different is finally happening in Los Angeles. The new food and gardening culture *feels* like the beginnings of change in a city that is

infamous for its supposed lack of centers, green spaces, and overall culture. It appears as an anecdote to the inherited narrative of declension in Los Angeles: a city that was almost a great urban center, but split apart at the seams sometime around World War II and has been oozing without direction ever since. One of the paradoxes of this narrative is that is true in many senses, but the city is so multifaceted that any master narrative quickly dissolves (Soja 1996). Los Angeles as a city and region has been infamously fragmented culturally, politically and even ecologically (Fogelson 1967; Klein 1997; McWilliams 1973). But that truth obfuscates a whole city of other histories and spaces that still create meaning and identity to the urban spaces that are Los Angeles (Pulido, Barraclough, and Cheng 2012).

In terms of the agrarian identity in Los Angeles, it is true that for many citizens it is novel and occasionally radical to consider tearing up their lawn to put in vegetables. There is little memory that their lot may have once been laid out for just that purpose. There is genuine surprise and enthusiasm at the appearance of local fruits and vegetables in new farmers markets, of “urban homesteading,” and other distinctly non-urban seeming ideas taking hold. At the same time, there are parts of the city that have held on to (though often re-making them over time) dimensions of a more agrarian Los Angeles. In Compton, the largely Black, though increasingly Latino community of “Richland Farms,” has maintained gardens and an equestrian lifestyle for three quarters of a century (“Richland Farms | Departures | KCET” 2013). Inversely, as Laura Barraclough argues, whole communities of wealthy white Angelenos have maintained rural-urbanist identities well past the 1950s, particularly around horses, on the fringes of Los Angeles (2009; 2011). There are Japanese-American horticulturalists around the region who still maintain the businesses started generations ago by their families (Hayden 1995, 119–122). And there are horticulture and the last remnants of vocational agriculture training still offered at high schools and community colleges in the San Fernando Valley. There are the families of migrant farm workers, displaced peasants from across the Americas, who have likewise been maintaining gardens and small livestock in their working-class neighborhoods. But all of these communities exist on the edges, if not outside, of predominantly white and very middle class “mainstream” culture in Los Angeles. So, some of what appears as new, is only so because the tastemakers have not taken the time to look around and engage across diverse communities. The structural divisions of race, ethnicity and class in the city obfuscate the diversity of agrarian projects in Los Angeles. This leads to a regular series of “discoveries” that people other than new-comers to home gardening and cooking are engaged in many of the same activities that seem novel within a particular set of middle-class identities. This can unfortunately reinforce an overall colonial approach to the food renaissance, the problem of what Julie Guthman has called “bringing good food to others” (2008a). Enthusiastic foodies readily blend together a sense that *others* need to be shown how to eat, grow and live better, because they once knew how, but it is up to the outsiders to bring a dwindling lifestyle back to life, while bringing the communities together.

This is a delicate critique to make, because the food renaissance in Los Angeles is emphatically comprised of people drawn from across the immensely

diverse geography of the metropolis. The racial and class politics of imagining a new garden city reflect a city where people of color are the majority, and the dominant force in producing the place, but where white elites absolutely still control much of the power (especially in terms of representation) in controlling resources. Conversely, to critique and dismiss the food renaissance as *only* a white, middle class project risks reinforcing the assumption that it is only a white middle class project by ignoring the incredible diversity of people, practices and agendas that are orbiting around food and agriculture in Los Angeles. At the same time, as I have tried to suggest above, the critique cannot be completely ignored, because there are race and class based divisions across the city that are *structural* and cannot be undone by a universal new love of collard greens and chilies from around the world. Throughout this study, I will make every effort to walk the line between acknowledging the broad base of the movement and recognizing its limits due to the realities of a society ruled by capitalism and white supremacy.

Putting the Urban in “Urban Food”

Los Angeles is not unique in its experience of the contemporary food renaissance. Indeed it is a national, and in many ways international, cultural shift towards renewed interests in food, agriculture and rethinking the global capitalist food system. Nor is Los Angeles entirely unique in having negotiated its urban growth in relation to internal and external agrarian spaces, though as I argued in chapter one, no other American city has been so wrapped up in struggling with an unachievable Garden City ideal. In this and the following chapters I look at how that historical geography continues to be inflected in the contemporary moment, specifically with how the urban experience of Los Angeles is still so markedly different than that of other cities. I argue that, while food movements are global in many dimensions vis-à-vis the food system, the specificity of urban geography in Los Angeles is where we should turn our attention to understand the material and ideological contours of the broader movement. It is what happens on the ground and in urban politics that most shape food movements. While at the same time, we cannot mistake “the local” as a discrete, homogenous location from which “the global” can be remade (Hart 2001; Mohan and Stokke 2000)

The landscape of Los Angeles is often describe in hyperbolic terms that dwell on what percentage of the region’s land is dedicated to cars (Varnelis 2009) and yards (Haeg, Allen, and Balmori 2010) and not parks (Wolch, Wilson, and Fehrenbach 2005) or the mythologized high density, sustainable spaces of Jane Jacobs inflected new urbanism. Such tropes have been deployed both in mock horror to dismiss the “urbaneness” of Los Angeles and with pride to argue for a new Los Angeles-centric form of urbanism (cf. A. J. Scott and Soja 1998; Soja 1996; Dear 2003). Both sides of the debate of how to best abstract the city into some ideal type can obfuscate the more subtle and heterogeneous concrete (no pun intended) geography of Los Angeles. The landscape of the city does call out to Los Angeles foodies to be transformed into more agrarian spaces. As much as the mythos of the car culture is overblown, there is remarkably little public green space in Los Angeles. Farmers markets serve a purpose as public spaces as much as a place to buy groceries. Similarly, Angelenos with an eye towards urban agriculture imagine

every empty lot as a community garden rather than another parking lot. Outside of the overlooked dense industrial and commercial centers, a century of Garden-City infused suburbanization has left the city with hundreds of thousands of open-lot houses, many of which are miniscule by modern standards but still sit upon front and back lawns that can be reimagined as productive gardens. Abandoned stores are reimagined as cooperatives and food hubs. In all of these examples, food and agriculture are the lens through which the city is understood, but the object of the imagining remains the urban spaces of the city.

Yet, in much urban-food scholarship the emphasis is placed on *food*, and much less on the *urban* side of the contraction. The urban-ness of so much of the food movement is, I argue, under explored to the point that we are at times missing the point of so called food politics. In my conversations with urban gardeners the scale of what they were trying to achieve was often at the neighborhood or city scale. They have little to no interest in a deep engagement with rural landscapes or modes of production, but are occupied with how to alter their day-to-day lives in the City of Los Angeles. Perhaps it can go without saying, as so much of the country now lives in cities and much of the national experience is urban. But I find the urban dimensions of food movements worth briefly theorizing here to contribute a different angle from which to analyze the neoliberal effect of the alternative food movement. The extent to which food politics embody and reproduced neoliberal ideology has been dissected in many ways already by the cluster of agro-food studies scholars UC Santa Cruz (c.f. Allen 2008; Guthman 2008b; Pudup 2008 as a start), but almost exclusively through the intersecting lenses of food systems, labor and bodies.

At the risk of being overly didactic: when individuals and organizations talk about reworking the food system, they are primarily interested in feeding an urban population. The *system* in this case is the social-economic system that moves food from the rural countryside where the food is produced to the hungry urban people. The liberal logic follows that, since urban people are the consumers, they should dictate (their demand) how the food system works (production). So it is not merely that “we are all now consumers” but that we, as consumers, have purview over the geographic arrangement of the food system. And we are urban, so we want an urban-oriented food system. This has two overlapping manifestations. The first is as a scathing critique of how agriculture is done “out there.” The mainstream alternative food movement has constructed rural sites of industrial agriculture as ground zero of the problems with the food system. This view draws on old tropes of urban Americans’ disdain for rural life, and reinforces notions that alternative food movements are exclusively the purview of liberal urban elites (Sayre 2011). Commodity farmers in particular are cast as hapless dupes, too ignorant or stubborn to see that the agro-industrial complex is manipulating them into destroying the planet and themselves. From the urban vantage point, followers of writers like Michael Pollan (2007) have come to see the perpetrators of bad agro-food practices as the caricature of a morbidly obese farmer driving a combine: too in debt to abandon his folly and return to the idyllic life of a small-scale, diversified organic farm. My purpose here is not necessarily to unpack these tropes—indeed, there is mostly, tragically, truth in them—but to show that irrespective of how urbanites feel

about the fate of the quintessential American farmer, those producers are understood as being of a different, far off and disconnected place. There is a geographic “othering” of the bulk of American agriculture and food production.

Foodies will quickly rattle off how the commodity subsidies that prop up the industrial food system lead directly to overproduction of crops like corn and soy which leads directly to “cheap” and bad food. While there is certainly a great deal to critique about how subsidies function, Guthman argues that subsidies are a symptom of overproduction, not its cause (2011, 121). As she explains, the trouble with this argument is that it essentially reproduces the neoliberal logic that the market is distorted by the subsidies. The logic follows that if the subsidies were removed (or shifted) farmers would make the rational choice to produce something more profitable like fruits and vegetables. Beyond reproducing Liberal rational choice economic fallacies, the argument fails to address the crises of overproduction endemic to capitalist agriculture. Rather it places the fault firmly on the federal state for distorting the market at the behest of bad corporate actors.

The neoliberal critique of the state vis-à-vis globalized agriculture has an important parallel in a local critique of the urban state, which is the topic of Chapter Three, but worth rehearsing briefly here. Urban gardeners seem to most often encounter the urban state when it acts to limit or stop their projects. Rarely does it appear to support them or act as a benefactor to their small farms and gardens in the way it appears to for distant agro-industrial farms. These entwined encounters and non-encounters with the state feed an urban food-politics that often embraces the rollback and rollout of neoliberal policy (Peck 2010). Urban food activists’ suspicion of the state is by no means unwarranted. It is not necessarily a product of a neoliberal agenda per se, but jibes unfortunately with larger projects to dismantle the state and devolve all responsibility for social reproduction to the individual (see Hall, Massey, and Rustin 2013 for a discussion of neoliberal effects in everyday lives).

I argue the reverberations of neoliberal ideology within the food movement hinder visions of a radical and sustainable alternative food system.

The second manifestation of the urban-food perspective, and of more significance to this dissertation, is the reimagining the city itself as a site to produce and provide food. It is in this second manifestation that we see the proliferation of organized garden projects (to use Pudup’s term(2008)) and home gardens. But a food movement to garden the city is seriously curtailed by city and regional government’s ability to shape the use of urban space (McClintock 2010). For a number of reasons, city governments have a lot to say about who can grow what, where and why. They are primarily concerned with the lifeblood of the city itself: property values. But they must also obviously engage with conceived notions of health and safety. Or, as with the parking example above, and as we shall see below, the State frequently is called on to enter in negotiations over agro-food spaces by proxy.

With the occasional exception, few urban gardeners or farmers in Los Angeles are proposing that urban agriculture become the primary source of food for the city. It is readily acknowledged that not everyone can grow *all* of their own food, but a basic education in agriculture is seen as essential to understanding the connections

between humans, nature and food. So even if one cannot get out to the countryside every weekend, or grow up on a farm, one can still learn the values that come from them. There is a long and fascinating history of how urbanites have taken up the Agrarian romanticism that stretches from contemporary urban homesteaders (c.f. Carpenter 2010) through urbanites reading Wendell Berry to the first recorded poems in Western history (cf. Williams 1973) that is beyond the purview of this dissertation. More broadly, the products of the Jeffersonian myth colliding with industrial capitalism (often resulting in what we know as the suburbs) cast a long shadow over American Urbanism, especially in terms of Garden City visions (L. Marx 1964; K. T. Jackson 1985; Hayden 2003).

Garden, farm and food projects for the sake of fun and “community”.

Why an urban food renaissance and in a city like Los Angeles, at this historical moment? Scholars and foodie practitioners give us wide-ranging answers that are often entangled with one another. Indeed, it is not always clear what constitutes a scholarly observation on food movements and what comes from the movement itself. This is not necessarily a bad thing, academics have been active participants in the movement and food movement activists have contributed much to scholarship. While few foodies may use the term metabolic rift (c.f. McClintock 2010, Foster 2000), many are quick to explain their desire to close the loop between their consumption and food production as the impetus for their gardens or shopping at the farmers market. Similarly, for example, food activists and government officials have not (yet) taken up the debate laid out in Guthman’s *Weighing In* on the diverse causes of rising obesity in the United States and how and why it is a problem. But there is growing consensus that the food available in cities is, on the whole, not good and comes from a broken system. Nor do most foodies expound upon Marxian notions of “alienation,” though the popular literature and social media are replete with narratives and theories on the benefits of gardening, cooking, preserving and the general craft around food to reconnect one with a sense of purpose outside of “work life” (Frauenfelder 2010). The entangled motivations are internal to the food renaissance as well, with different actors drawing (often simultaneously though unevenly) from different arguments as to why food and agriculture should suddenly be at the forefront of urban culture and politics.

Which brings us to the one angle that is as close to universal in the food renaissance as any: the “warmly comforting notion” of community that pervades through every corner of food movements. Farmers markets are a place for community. There is much more to be said about notions of community, and it is certainly a term that is problematic in countless ways, but I think it is worth pointing to what are the underlying desire behind seeking community in the food renaissance—a sense of social cohesion in urban space. This is not as radical perhaps as the “right to the city” that has become an intellectual and political framework in recent years (Lefebvre 1992; D. Mitchell 2003; Harvey 2012) but draws on similar tropes: urban space can be public space, urban space can be social space, urban space need not necessarily be capitalist/productive space, all production in urban space need not to be for profit, urban citizens have a right to

determine the uses of the spaces they inhabit, and those spaces can and should be safe, healthy and sustainable. All of these arguments emerge from a food-centric sense of community.^{xxii} The question remains whether these communities are necessary, or sufficient, to create the conditions for significant structural change in the urban food system (which is examined more closely in chapter 3), or a social movement around the increasingly popular concept of “Food Justice” (A. Alkon and Agyerman 2011; Gottlieb and Joshi 2010). But before passing judgment on the political potential of alternative food practitioners in Los Angeles, it is necessary to lay out just what practices constitute these new communities.

Masters of the Garden

As briefly sketched above, there are myriad alternative food projects growing in Los Angeles as I write. They range from large-scale citywide initiatives to restructure the city’s food system to very small project to plant vegetables in parking medians, and from neighborhood “food swaps” to changing the way hundreds of thousands of kids are fed in the Los Angeles Unified School District. The following takes a few key examples to look at the material and ideological work done by alternative foodies in Los Angeles.

One of the most interesting places to start, in part because it is one of the longest running programs in the county, is the Los Angeles Master Gardeners program. The program was restarted in 1994 as the University of California Extension began to roll back its *direct* support to low-income community gardens in Los Angeles. Today, it is a network of nearly 1,000 “master gardeners,” with expertise in the “fields of compost, soil, integrated pest management, and plant growth” (Savio 2011). Their main purpose is to support low-income community gardens throughout the county. Though it has been significantly adapted to meet the needs of contemporary Los Angeles, the master gardening program is actually a holdover from Los Angeles’s more agrarian days and is funded and run by the agricultural extension of the University of California—an organization that used to support more commercial agrarian enterprises in Los Angeles, but today is far more known for supporting industrial agriculture in California’s central valley than mustering resources for inner-city community gardens.

The Master Gardener program, run by the indefatigable Yvonne Savio, is built around an ever-growing network of “master gardeners” who attach themselves to community gardens in order to share their expertise with the other gardeners. To become a master gardener, one has to be accepted into and complete a three month training and commit to maintaining twenty-five volunteer hours per year (fifty in the first year of the program) at a garden. To its credit, the program intentionally selects gardeners, predominantly women, who come from underserved communities across LA. The master gardeners receive basic training in how to grow vegetables, compost, manage pests and ration water in a garden. But the primary focus of the training is to help them understand what a community garden (or similar project) needs. Then, as they volunteer at various gardens around the county, they are able to connect with other master gardeners to do everything

from sharing seeds and plant starts to help negotiating water rates with the Department of Water and Power.

Each year the number of applicants to be master gardeners far exceeds the number of spaces there are in the course. In 2010, it was over 200 applications for 50 spots. Hundreds of people are competing to become one of the thousand people who volunteer to help other people garden. There is no pay or other compensation, just the privilege of calling yourself a “master gardener” and access to the network of other gardeners. In most ways, the program speaks to the best of intentions in terms of growing an alternative food movement—state funds directed towards helping (mostly) women of color be community leaders through a loose social network. At the same time, the program is not without its problems. The training does not necessarily turn a well intentioned gardener into a *master* gardener in a year—that only comes with years of gardening, mentoring, study and experience. So some community gardens are frustrated by the inexperience of their master gardeners. Moreover, the supply of master gardeners seems to be outstripping the demand of community gardens, with some gardens complaining that they are repeatedly approached by master gardeners looking for somewhere to do their volunteer hours, and feeling like what they really need are more financial resources to improve or grow the physical spaces of their gardens. On the whole, the success of the master garden program demonstrates the growing enthusiasm for gardening on its own terms. Master gardeners I spoke with could readily list any of the socio-economic justifications for urban agriculture, but most come back around to liking gardening for the sake of gardening in itself—transforming unused urban land into productive communal spaces.

The master gardeners network grows into parts of the city that go well beyond the strictest definitions of “community gardens.” Master gardeners frequently find themselves called upon to consult and advise on all sorts of agricultural related projects in Los Angeles, from back yard gardens to commercial small farms. They are also increasingly involved in forming their own new projects, that promote gardening around the city, especially in lower-income areas like South Los Angeles. Part beautification, part community investment and part health-focused, these types of organized gardening projects have become popular with community organizations that traditionally organize around similar areas. I will return at the end of this chapter to a more explicit discussion of how these kinds of projects are taken up, but for the time being I want to suggest that the effectiveness of the master gardener program has been instrumental in supplying enough loose support to keep LA gardeners connected across a broad geographic space, without necessarily dictating a rigid program for how gardening projects should be undertaken. Moreover the loose set of tacit values that unite gardeners—that locally grown food and the process of growing it is good for the health, wellbeing and development of individuals and communities—means that a wide variety of projects can develop under the tutelage of the master gardeners.

Green Grounds

One of the most successful projects to be organized by master gardeners has been a group called “Green Grounds.” The organization was founded informally in 2010 by a small group of gardeners who had been through the master gardener program and along with a few of their friends, colleagues and children. The sole purpose of the group was to meet once a month and volunteer to transform a resident of South LA’s *front yard* into a vegetable garden. The group very intentionally did not have a structure or formal organization. In meetings, becoming a 501(c)3 was discussed, but most members agreed it would distract from the main purpose of getting together to volunteer—as a 501c3 needs careful administration, reports, budgets and time spent engaging with the government. They agreed to exist as word of mouth organization and maintain a basic website with information on upcoming “dig-ins” and photos of former successes. The two main pillars of the organization were, first, that the dig-ins should be, whenever possible, in a front yard or other publicly visible space so that neighbors could see how great the home grown produce was, share it, or at least become curious about what their neighbors were up to. In this way Green Grounds would act not only as volunteer labor force, but also as form of propaganda for the benefits of urban gardening. It is a literal Johnny Appleseed approach to urban activism, with each garden a seed in the community meant to generate more gardens and more community at that. As we will see in the following chapters, it is an approach that has met with mixed results.

The second pillar of the organization, that dig-ins ought to take place in South Los Angeles, is complicated by the social and spatial positions of the founding members. The group came out of and congealed around the largest institutions at the northern edge of South Los Angeles: The University of Southern California (USC) and The Natural History Museum (located in Exposition Park, just across the street from USC). Not that either institution directly supported the organization, but the founding members of the group were mostly in and around South LA because of their employment, rather than being long term members of the “community.” Though the notion of community is especially slippery here, in no small part because for the last 50 years at least, USC’s relationship with the community that surrounds it that ranged from antagonistic to paternalistic. USC has pushed hard for both increased policing of the area surrounding it and been a major force in the gentrification and displacement of working people from South LA. As harsh of a reality as that may be, faculty and students at USC are in another sense a very active part of the South LA community—especially those who choose to live in the area.^{xxiii} In this context, an organization that wants its neighbors to plant gardens in their front yards to make the neighborhood “better” (by a very particular set of standards) is necessarily navigating treacherous waters. The process of improving the urban landscape for the already present members of the community always runs the risk of making it more attractive to would-be gentrifiers. Green Grounds may help a Black family put in raised beds and vegetables in front of their California bungalow with the intention of signaling to neighbors that “good food” and a beautiful landscape are easily within reach. But there is perhaps nothing more appealing to an urban gentrifier in the current milieu than early 20th century housing stock with kale in the front yard.

The core group of original Green Grounders formed around a master gardener named Florence, who teaches both in the master gardener program and short courses on “victory garden” at the Natural History museum. Florence is, by all measures, a true master gardener with an encyclopedic knowledge of plants and a confidence and enthusiasm that inspires those around her to take up gardening as a banner without hesitation. Several faculty from USC have connected to Florence through one of her students, another master gardener and co-worker at the museum, and wife of one of the faculty. The USC faculty were, not coincidentally, in precarious positions vis-à-vis the university (being either non-tenured or non-tenure track), but had all made investments in the community around USC. Two had used USC subsidies to buy homes in the area, while a third had started a student garden. Along with their spouses and several graduate students, they straddle an unusual place in South LA. They are neither of the majority of the lower-income South LA communities of color, nor completely of the powerful elites at the University who treat the neighborhood like an empty piece of real estate to be developed.

The strongest connection to South LA communities came through Ron Finley, the (now) most famous of the Green Ground’s original members (see chapter 4). Ron is an African America artist, designer and long-time resident of South LA. He is also an avid gardener and through the master gardener program knew Florence. He helped bridge the connection between the USC/museum affiliated crew and the people they most wanted to provide gardens for. The first dig-ins were in Ron’s yard, as well as the yards of the wealthier and white members of the group. After the initial self-starting, word began to spread amongst friends of friends (mostly of Ron’s) in the neighborhoods south of USC. Soon, dig-ins were taking place in the yards of middle aged African American women, not always in the front yard as the group would have hoped, but with an enthusiasm from the recipient/participants in the new garden project that fueled the growth of the organization. Each dig-in brought new volunteers, a mixture of the original group, their loose networks of friends, recipients of previous dig-ins and their loose network of friends—as well as a growing number of participants who had simply heard about the organization via social media, their website and word of mouth.

The Green Grounds model is by no means going to revolutionize the food system in Los Angeles. They are small and volunteer based, the plants come mostly from Florence and a few of the other key members with the space and knowledge to cultivate a few extra plants, and there is a constant question of where soil and tools will come from. These are the explicit limits, in the strictest sense of there being reasonable bounds, to a Green Grounds style alternative food project. They are in many ways simply doing a small part to (re) popularize gardening and support a hyper-local sense of community investment, which we can imagine as being part of a much larger set of projects to remake the city and the global food system. If we look to Green Grounds, and other groups around Los Angeles with similar agendas, gardening is valuable as a practice in itself and the greater personal and social benefits naturally emerge from it. On the one hand, it is unreasonable to criticize an organization for not doing more than what they set out to do, or in a way different

from what they intended. On the other, there are implicit—less discussed—limits and effects to the Green Grounds model that must be acknowledged.

First, even casual volunteers engaged in the simple (and romanticized) act of gardening cannot escape having to engage urban politics. Much like their antecedents in the long forgotten Home Garden Council, the Green Grounds volunteers have persistently run into unhappy neighbors and a banal, but insistent, State with rigid views on how urban land is *meant* to be used. As much as alternative food movements are ideologically constructed around a myth of “if you build it, they will come,” it has proven time and time again that there are people who are not swayed by the beauty and taste of a home grown tomato—especially when their property value is on the line.

Second, and more difficult to draw the contours of, are the limits to the “post-racial” style organization of Green Grounds. In terms of crude measures of diversity, Green Grounds has members who are Black, Japanese-American, White, Latino, young, old, queer, straight, long-time members of the neighborhood and people who might as well be tourists—they in many ways embody the radical potential of food and gardening to transcend lines of difference. However, and this is the serious sticking point of alternative agriculture everywhere, the good will and horizontal structures of the group do nothing to undo or alter the structural inequalities, violence and racism that produced the social relations (and the landscape of South LA that embodies them) that created the necessary conditions to make an organizations like Green Grounds seem necessary in the first place. While Green Grounds does not suffer as severely from the “bringing good food to others” mentality lambasted by Guthman (2008a) and Allen(2010), they remain a long way from producing urban “Food Justice” in South Los Angeles (Zappia 2012). Gardens can and do make people feel good, in terms of their health, their space and place in a city, their ability to do fruitful (literally) labor, and in relation to their neighbors and larger community, but they do not make people economically stable in a modern economy, nor necessarily empower people to have actual greater self determination. Though this last point is increasingly one of debate (c.f. White 2011; Heynen 2009; Alkon and Agyerman 2011). Gardens don’t necessarily need to be revolutionary, but there is a great danger in pretending or assuming that they are by their very nature radical (McKay 2011).

(Sub)urban Farming

Green Grounds and other gardening projects in Los Angeles “work” because of the built environment in Los Angeles. The residential landscape is famously filled with open-lot houses, albeit with notable exceptions like Downtown. Many of the neighborhoods and former small-towns that comprise South Los Angeles were built as collections of working class suburban homes. The houses may be small by contemporary suburban standards, but they almost always sit on an open lot available for gardening. Some houses may be further back on the lot with more front yard space, while others are street adjacent with large back yards, but the tightly packed row houses of the East are hard to come by. The presence of neighborhood after neighborhood of open lot houses in the urban fabric in Los Angeles is so

omnipresent as to make them almost overlooked. But because they serve such an important function in enabling a new set of garden city imaginaries, the particularities of the working class home-site warrants further scrutiny. Even the most ghettoized neighborhoods of Los Angeles— South and East Los Angeles— differ significantly from similar neighborhoods in other American cities. Ron Finley’s neighbors may be politically and economically some of the most marginalized citizens in Los Angeles, but they likely live in a single-family home with space for a garden.

South Los Angeles has become a highly visible hot bed for gardening,^{xxiv} but its not the only area. The phenomenon of converting old working and middle-class lawns into productive spaces is taking place all over the city. This has been done with some level of faux militancy, in the case of Fritz Haeg’s “attack on the front lawn” (2010). The lawn is projected as the ultimate symbol of bad-suburbanization, a fetishized totem of a bygone era. The yard uses unsustainable amounts of water to reproduce soulless conformity. In Haeg’s view, the lawn as a social or otherwise positive space is all but impossible (as opposed to Grampp 2008). He is not alone; all over the city similar views are expressed by homeowners, renters, and a wide swath of environmentally-minded activists who have a tacit understanding that Los Angeles is stuck with the built environment it has (for the time being), but that does not preclude repurposing it to supposedly more amenable uses. The promise of a front yard that produces a healthy supplement to the homeowners diet has even been commercialized into new forms of landscaping businesses. A company called Farmscape will now put raised beds in your front yard, maintain them for you, and let you enjoy the bounties of home-grown vegetables and flowers. Taking Haeg and others’ vision of an edible front yard, they have begun to offer a subscription service where there company builds raised beds in a yard and maintains them, leaving the homeowner with the responsibility of picking and consuming the fresh produce.

The idea of the edible yard is nothing new. The Small Farm Home movement had once promised the yard would be a productive space. Back-to-the-landers who stayed in cities (I. A. Boal et al. 2012) imagined all sorts of creative uses for growing on urban land. Even the go-go urban 1980s saw titles like “The Edible City Resource Manual” (Britz 1981) and *Los Angeles: A History of the Future* (Glover 1982). Indeed, as the J.B. Jackson quote that opens this chapter suggests, our national cultural obsession with gardening my ebb, but it always flows back more fecund than ever. Enthusiasm for such ideas, even at their peak, tends to be at the margins of mainstream urban and suburban life in Los Angles. But the landscape is always there, begging the question of what a yard *might* be. So while most of the homes that are currently undergoing an edible-renaissance were likely never Small Farm Homes, they still evoke a promise of converting a little open land and the southern California sunshine into a different kind of urban life.

Los Angeles’s eternal promise is that a different kind of life is possible. In this dissertation I am explicitly interested in the alternative kinds of communities that gardens and alternative food projects allow people to imagine. Thus I found myself sitting in the blazing southern California sun on a summer Saturday morning with a handful of alternative food activists in the inner ring suburb of Whittier. We were gathered around a folding table, drinking that most luxurious of California

products—fresh squeezed orange juice from a back yard orange tree. The table and folding chairs were the first steps towards a monthly free community café. The small group was chatting about various future projects and workshops they wanted to do around food production. Mostly they were waiting to see if their neighbors or other community members might come join them. Like with the Green Grounds front-yard-gardens, the free café was not only about the act of gardening or eating itself, but being a passive spectacle meant to entice passersby into questioning their relationship to food and each other. A few neighborhood children did, but no one else unexpected showed up.

The landscape of the street in Whittier could not be more iconic of post-war suburbia, with low-slung, nearly identical ranch homes stretching indefinitely towards the mountains in the distance. It is the kind of landscape that easily evokes the isolation of the “bourgeois nightmare” (cf. Fogelson 2005; K. T. Jackson 1985; Fishman 1989; Waldie 1996). So the temporary café and a few planter boxes in the front yard certainly had the potential to draw attention. The scene had the look of a bizzarro lemonade stand, where the proprietors were giving away the product. But while passersby, what few there were on the blazingly sunny suburban street, clearly took notice of the group in the yard, no one came over to see what was going on. A different kind of work was needed to translate that attention into a serious interest in learning about, let alone joining, their new group. Here the “if you build it they will come” hopes of alternative food projects have significant limits.

At the same time, the group in Whittier is not exactly the archetypal Southern California utopians getting their brains baked out in the sun. They have been doing careful and considerate organizing in their neighborhood and around the city to bring people together around alternative agriculture and a local food system. The *front yard* “café” is only one piece of a larger transformation of the space. The *back yard* (see photo below) is being used as a small farm by the group. The woman who owns the house is not actually a gardener herself, but through the Whittier Time Bank^{xxv} met other people interested in supporting an alternative local economy and agreed to share the space of the yard. Interestingly, she does not allow the group to use the inside of the house. Though small, the yard has been intensively cultivated and when I visited was producing a variety of lettuces, greens, onions, and the group is also running a small “Community Supported Agriculture” (CSA) box program from the yard.^{xxvi} Areas like Whittier are not high on anybody’s list of places that are about to get an influx of hipsters, the creative class, or whichever term we prefer for the class of younger bohemians that signal a coming wave of capital investments in artisanal coffee shops, upscale locavore restaurants, or high density luxury real estate developments. In other words, residents of places like Whittier who want to engage in alternative/sustainable/local food systems have to do it for themselves.

As noted above, the day of the free café, few neighbors came by at first, which was more a function of very few people being out on the suburban street on hot Saturday morning than anyone actively avoiding the gathering. As the day went on, a few people began to emerge: a neighbor boy, maybe nine or ten years old, who really liked to play in the garden, a handful of friends who wanted to participate in the café for the sake of the café; but it was the day’s main event that really drew a

small crowd. Around noon a woman arrived with a mother goat and two kids (that is, baby goats) so that members of the group, and whomever else was around, could get a demonstration of how to milk an animal. This is the kind of hands-on, back-to-the-basics kind of education that the Whittier group engages in, taking the ethos of knowing where your food comes from to its very end.

The three goats were certainly a site in the front yard of the suburban home, more out of place than 5 people sitting on folding chairs drinking orange juice. They may not have been 50 years ago, but small livestock today are not something most urbanites or suburbanites have the chance to interact with outside of a petting zoo, and almost never in relationship to their role as a source of food. As the goats milled about the front yard bleating, a pair of children from across the street came over to see the goats, and more people affiliated with the group (via e-mail and other social media) began to arrive to see the demonstration. Once the crowd had gathered, the whole entourage moved into the back yard to try their hands at milking a goat. It was harder than most people expected.

In the meantime, members of the CSA also began to arrive and collect their boxes. Many of whom stayed to see the goats, chat, and generally hang out. As much as it is a productive space, the yard functions as a semi-public social space where anyone is invited to join the loose community, but they have to know they're invited first. Invitations, in the form of flyers about the CSA, had been spreading through the area. A pair of Latina mothers and their children arrived to inquire about the CSA, because they had received a flyer from one of the group's organizers and were interested in the availability of local fruits and vegetables. An Asian-American man from the group explained that the CSA was already overbooked for the season, but spent quite some time talking with them about getting involved in the future, how they might do their own garden, and making sure they didn't leave empty handed anyway. While they were chatting, the women's children went to play with the goats. Someone asked them if they'd ever seen a goat before (presuming the novelty that the rest of the group was experiencing would be two fold in the children's awe). To which one of the older children shyly replied that, yes, they saw goats all the time when they visited their extended families in Mexico. In many ways, the whole scene captured the promise of a micro-alternative food project and garden in Los Angeles. As with the Green Grounders, a new community was forming within the structures of the old, drawing in the young and old of multiple classes, races and ethnicities, all around a loosely shared set of interests in local, healthy, sustainable food.

A new garden city utopia is hardly about to erupt from the southern suburbs of Los Angeles, however. As idyllic as a monthly afternoon gathering may be, most things about the Whittier suburban farm fly in the face of received knowledge and experience of urban life in Los Angeles. At best, most of the target community remains oblivious or disinterested in such projects, and at worst they actively push back against it. A few months before this particular café and goat event, when the initial front yard garden was started (which mostly consists of covering the yard with wood chips and a few half-used planter boxes so far) neighbors complained to the city that the home-owner was in violation of zoning ordinances requiring yards to be at a minimum 60% covered in greenery. Ordinances like this are common in Southern California communities, essentially using the city's powers to act as

homeowners' association and insure that yards become neither dead brown spots nor automotive work spaces, both of which would reflect poorly on a neighborhood's property values. The owner of the "farm" house was duly slapped with a fine and told to replant grass (the counter attack to Haeg), which the farming crew took on as their own cross to bear. The ordinance was poorly phrased, they claimed. As one farmer told me, it was unclear how the city even intended to measure such a thing, whether a tree canopy or broad leaf plants counted as enough green space, or if literally had to be grass. Moreover, they argue it was not as if the yard was going un-landscaped or being used for some public nuisance—just the opposite. The cruel irony turned out to be that the city of Whittier had been so badly hurt by the 2008 crises that city functions like arbitrating disputes between neighbors over zoning were the kind of thing that had been furloughed. A crisis brought on by the mass manipulation of the housing market (largely in Southern California (Bardhan and Walker 2011)) was actively undermining a community's ability to remake their suburban spaces. So the group remained in limbo, carrying on with their plans, but always with the ominous reminder that not everyone in their "community" likes *their* "community."

What I have tried to emphasize in the above is that the food renaissance is inseparable from questions of what constitutes urban space and its uses in Los Angeles. Specifically, I show how the urban landscape can be manipulated to convey a particular set of ideologies and daily practices, in this case around how people eat. Los Angeles has and continues to blur the line between urban space being suburban space being productive space. It can be, and is, all of the above, but it is also made through the everyday experiences of the people who garden and eat in it. These practices, the transformation of urban spaces, are what I argue lie at the heart of the urban food renaissance. For many people in Los Angeles's food movements, the transformation of the overall food system is a goal, but a distant one. Few of the gardeners or farmers market shoppers are dedicating their time to organizations that scholars argue are necessary for real and lasting structural change in the food system—for example, supporting food worker organizations like the Food Chain Workers Alliance or international food sovereignty groups like Via Campesina. They are, however, transforming their own lives and the way the city works around them through their everyday experiences, which we must take seriously (Chase, Crawford, and Kaliski 1999; Groth and Wilson 2003).

It All Grows Together In L.A.

There are two archetypes (stereotypes) of the contemporary urban foodie. One is the plaid-clad, skinny jeaned hipster who only eats organic arugula and eggs from chickens they raised in the back yard. These are the fodder for frequent mockery (as in the popular comedy show *Portlandia*) and scorn in the popular media, to say nothing of critical scholarship. The second is of the radical urban environmental-food-activist, who rails against capitalism through a clumsy mix of self-righteous lifestyle choices and unrealistic demands that the agro-industrial food system and military-industrial-complex be dismantled immediately. Both characters are also almost exclusively white. Elements of both caricature, and worse, are certainly present in Los Angeles's alternative food scenes. But such easily adopted tropes can

overshadow the diversity of people and projects taking place in the everyday moments of gardening, shopping at farmers markets, or cooperative culinary projects. On the one hand, this reality makes the promise of the urban food renaissance that much more compelling. It is widespread and not intrinsically connected to any one socio-cultural position in the city. There is space, in all senses of the word, for everyone at the table. On the other hand, we must acknowledge that this space is far more confined than it might first seem, or to mix the metaphor further, there is space for everyone at the table, but the size and sturdiness of the table is still an open question.

In the late 1980s, Ed Soja (1989) took hold of the *Los Angeles Times* masthead, “it comes together in Los Angeles” to lead the charge for a more nuanced understanding of Los Angeles’s exceptionalism in the pantheon of American urbanism. More recently, scholars like Ruth Milkman (2006) and Manual Pastor (Pastor, Benner, and Matsuoka 2009) and, importantly, their network of colleagues (Milkman, Bloom, and Narro 2013), have shown that one of the areas where LA has continued to produce itself as exception is through progressive politics. In the broad field of social justice activism, though largely focused on unions and immigrant rights, they have shown how politics are done through loose and broad coalitions across the region. Everything from union organizing to environmental campaigns is done by drawing on wide networks that share resources and people (who are often moving from one organization to another in various capacities) to achieve their goals. By most measures the food renaissance falls short of the major progressive reforms that activist-scholars in Los Angeles are optimistic about. There are elements of major, trans regional coalitions developing in food politics, like the LA based Food Chain Workers Alliance and the Los Angeles Food Policy Council (who we will meet in the next chapter). However, as I have discussed, the agendas of many people and organizations engaged in food and agriculture are far less oriented toward such structured, policy oriented change.

That being said, the food movements in Los Angeles follow very similar patterns of openness and sharing (of people, resources, ideas, spaces) across a wide variety of interests and different goals. People, in particular, move easily between different food/gardening social spaces, drawing connections between them and weaving a loose, but big umbrella for the food renaissance—which gives it both power and resilience. But as I will suggest in the concluding section, this looseness leaves some large holes, as well. For example, I first met Megan, the woman at the center of the Whittier group, far away from Whittier, on the other side of Los Angeles in the upscale part of Altadena (a town just North of the more well known Pasadena). We were at an impromptu dinner party following an illegal farmers market held at the former estate of Western novel/film writer Zane Gray. The estate is now owned by a film executive and her restaurateur husband, both of whom collectively dabble in semi-professional goat rearing and cheese making. Everyone at the dinner was involved in overlapping food and farming projects around LA. I had been invited there by a man named Joseph, whom I had met at a Huntington Library conference on Urban Agriculture in Los Angeles. Joseph and I were both there because of Tara Kolla of Silver Lake Farms, a flower, compost and CSA vendor,

who's prominence in the LA food/ag scene will be made clear in the following chapter. Joseph is part of the imminent Arroyo Secco cooperative (the first major cooperative grocery store to be opened in LA in decades), the Los Angeles bread bakers group (which is part social club around learning baking techniques and part local food advocacy group), and he has subsequently become the manager of the new Alta Dena farmers market (highlighted in the recent comprehensive study of Urban Agriculture in Los Angeles out of UCLA). Other members of the Whittier group were at the dinner, along with a pair of master gardeners, an instructor from the master preservers program, and Eric Knudsen, LA's star of the urban homesteading blogosphere. This kind of social gathering clearly happens under the aegis of "foodies" sharing their interests, but has significant implications for how the urban food renaissance engages politics.

Meanwhile, Megan invited me to a fundraiser for a new community/school garden, to be held at a historical preservation site turned artists cooperative in East LA. She had been hosting regular vegan dinners, showcasing locally grown and scavenged food, and this one was themed to help bring together different foodies from around the city to jump start the organization of the new garden. The fundraiser raised a little bit of money for the garden, but more importantly connected several young gardeners to established master gardeners (and their wide network) and to much wealthier benefactors with an interest in urban gardening. Each connection fit easily into the big umbrella of the "food movement" even through the participants in the dinner came from far-flung parts of the city and wildly divergent backgrounds. They share a common, if loosely defined, goal of seeing more and more gardens, farms and access to local food in Los Angeles. It is a vision that both accidentally and intentionally draws on the city's long history of imagining better communities through gardens. In the "fractured metropolis," the food renaissance constitutes a widespread popular movement to collectively produce common spaces for production, consumption and new social relations (relatively) divorced from the dictates of Capital. The question remains, however, if the renaissance can sustain its extraordinary growth of the past decade? Both internally and externally there are forces that constrain what directions such a vision opens up for the city and its citizens.

From Peasant to Proletariat and Back Again?

Throughout this chapter I have suggested that we begin our analysis of the urban food renaissance by taking it on its own terms vis-à-vis urban life. Critical scholarship often attacks or dismisses this collection of practices that constitute food movements on the grounds that they are insufficient to redirect the food system to a more just and sustainable system—which they most certainly are—but under analyze their implications for everyday life in cities. Which is not to say that the urban food renaissance ought to be taken as a benignly benevolent movement by and for urbanites. Especially in the terms of urban life, food movements raise serious concerns about what kind of a city and city life is being imagined through the lens of food and agriculture. The distinctly American brand of apolitical fantasy and conservative individualism runs a chilling streak through many of the currents

of the contemporary urban food movement, closing off the potential for growing a more activist, collectivist food-justice politics that connects food and agricultural spaces to broader social justice struggle in the city. Simultaneously, food and gardening have an almost unmatched ability to appear as the most universal and benignly positive areas for action, without ever acknowledging all of the urban social and structural problems that are not addressed by community gardens and farmers markets. To take one small example, returning to Fritz Haeg's "attack on the front lawn," the use of lawns is not *really* a major problem facing Los Angeles. Certainly, water usage and chemlawns are serious concerns for a major city in semi-arid Southern California, but the ability to grow some vegetables in the yard does little to address more fundamental structural issues: limited employment and poor work conditions, lack of affordable housing, violence, and the major environmental issues like climate chaos and drought. Yet the Haeg's manifesto comes with endorsements from Alice Waters, Eric Schlosser and Bill McKibben. The trifecta of Liberal food politics and environmentalism easily slip into discussing urban gardens as if they are silver bullets to all of our problems. When we get to the complexity of urban issues, we must be careful to distinguish between when gardens and alternative food practices are anodyne and when they are panacea.

I am particularly concerned here with the ideological implications the urban food renaissance has on the imaginary of what a city is or should be. In the first chapter, I identified serious shortcomings to the possibilities of a true garden city in industrial Los Angeles, arguing that *local* food had no inherent properties capable of ameliorating the conditions created under a capitalist economy. The internal contradictions of capitalism necessarily produce inequality and class conflict in cities, in no small part because they fundamentally function by concentrating more labor in one place than is absolutely necessary for production—what Marx called the "industrial reserve army." When we take Los Angeles as the capital of the 20th century, we see a city grown from the accumulation of industry, oil profits and real estate wealth that were not products of the natural bounty of Southern California, but the millions upon millions of migrants to the region. The masses who built Los Angeles were squeezed at each turn for every last drop of surplus value they could produce, whether through open shop wages or the bondage of home ownership (Laslett 2012). Now, as the quantity and quality of working class jobs continues to erode in Los Angeles—especially for people of color—the standing industrial reserve army in the city looks terrifyingly precarious (Bonacich and Alimahomed-Wilson 2011). The urban food renaissance is increasingly complicit in creating an ideological apparatus that normalizes this condition. Beyond the conceits of a neoliberal city, what gardens and farms offer is neither a decent job nor a social safety net to guarantee the bare necessities of life and social reproduction, but the privilege of growing one's own food on urban land. The proposition looks remarkably more feudal if we consider capital's ongoing efforts to control all forms of urban land—not just industrial and commercial, but increasingly debt-financed and bank owned residential land—as a major source for profit. That is, not only are the urban poor expected to provide the means of their own reproduction, they are potentially doing so on land they rent, lease or are otherwise in debt to a major financial institution for.

The role of the urban food renaissance is only one part of an ideological move to reframe “surplus” populations in cities. Kathryn Mitchell (2010) has termed the condition “absolute surplus population,” to denote people that no longer have any use to capitalism (as opposed to being kept in reserve for when production needs more labor). She suggests they are now even beyond Foucauldian notions of management—that they are the people to be preemptively caged or left to die (K. Mitchell 2010; see also: Gilmore 2007; Alexander 2010; Loyd, Mitchelson, and BurrIDGE 2012). Along similar lines, Denning has proposed the concept of a “wageless life.” He argues that the long duré of the industrial revolution, the primary struggle of the working class was to secure a greater share of the surplus value they produced, to guarantee not only daily reproduction, but a higher quality of life. But the framework begins to crumble when there is no work offered in the first place (Denning 2010). If capital is no longer interested in purchasing the vast majority of labor for sale in American cities, the proletariat must seriously reconsider what their lives will look like in those cities. The potentially terrible twist with the urban food renaissance its role in making it appear as if the working classes might be able to survive as some newly constituted class of urban peasants: allotted enough land for subsistence, but always at the grace of their landlord, for whom they exist only to pay rents and provide services to. It would be hyperbolic to suggest that this is a real possibility, but the underlying logic of the food renaissance, when taken to its conclusion at one end, may be far more dystopian than utopian. Herein lies the real concern with the urban food movement vis-à-vis urban life. What can be a fun and healthy hobby, pastime or social marker for the upwardly mobile classes, promises a much dimmer future to those classes of people with increasingly limited access to resources. Which raises the fundamental question of economics, who has the power to control these resources, and in this particular case, urban space. It is to this question I turn in the next chapter.

^{xix} There is a very generic sort of nostalgia around food and gardening, a communal sense that in some previous time our grandparents could grow their own food and cook it, but like so much nostalgia that time and place is always somewhere over a receding horizon. That being said, while few of the gardeners and food activists I spent time with were particularly interested in returning to some specific urban-agrarian moment, they almost were fascinated by the specific histories of Los Angeles. A quick scan of popular media, especially related to urban agriculture, shows just how much in the last few years foodies have been drawing on selective histories to reinforce their agenda.

^{xxi} There are attempts at using remote sensing technologies to estimate the number of gardens, but nothing definitive has been published yet.

^{xxii} “Community” is likewise used to mask remarkably NeoLiberal, romantic, and exclusionary understandings of who has what rights in which spaces. See for example Pudup’s excoriating work on “organized spaces” (Pudup 2008)

^{xxiii} Up until the late 1990s USC was largely considered a “commuter” school, with both faculty and students living off and far from campus, traveling into the walled off island of the campus. With the redevelopment of downtown Los Angeles and gentrification of housing stock and business around USC, a growing number of students and faculty have been living nearer to USC. This has brought a flux of capital into the area and (unevenly) remade large swaths of neighborhood. This change as inevitably come with displacement and rising tension with communities that continue to be invaded by a privileged class of people moving into their spaces.

^{xxiv} In addition to the yard-gardens of Green Grounds, community gardening is also undergoing a renaissance in South Los Angeles. I discuss the phenomenon in slightly more detail in chapters 3 and 4, but see also (Sides 2012)

^{xxv} The Whittier time bank is (<http://whittiertimebank.org>) an organization where members volunteer their skills to help other members with various projects (like weeding a garden or a home construction project) in exchange for time-dollars which can be exchanged for either someone else’s labor or the products of their labor. Similar organizations have popped around the country, with various modifications of a basic commitment to creating and supporting a hyper local economy. Based on ideas like Woody Tasch’s “Slow Money” (2010), these projects make for collaborative communities of practice, but fail to address the internal contradictions of the circuits of capital.

^{xxvi} Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a term that has taken on a variety of meanings. Originally, a CSA was a subscription service in which customers would agree to a monthly, or some other upfront payment to a grower for a set amount of time. The customer then receives either a weekly or biweekly CSA “box” containing whatever is in season. In temperate climates with restricted growing seasons, this arrangement helps smooth out what is otherwise a very temporally uneven income stream for farmers. Normally they might have a few short weeks in which to sell a whole crop, have no idea what the price will be at that time, and then have to plan the rest of the year with little to no income to compensate. Under a CSA, a grower can plan plantings better and have a guaranteed income. In California, CSA has come to mean a wide variety of agricultural product aggregation and delivery services. One grower, or a third party, may collect produce from a whole group of other growers (or sometimes egg produces, bakers or dairies) and provide a weekly box for pickup to subscribers. In theory, the impact for the growers is still a regularized income stream, though in California because of the year round growing seasons, customers often start and stop memberships on a monthly basis. Moreover, the third party model introduces a middleman complication in terms of negotiating prices. The aggregation does help the smallest growers move their products to a market via bundling with other growers, and promises consumers interested in eating seasonally and locally a regular supply of fresh produce.

Chapter 3: The Southern (California) Question

It may be ruled out that immediate economic crises of themselves produce fundamental historical events; they can simply create a terrain more favorable to the dissemination of certain modes of thought, and certain ways of posing and resolving question involving the entire subsequent development of national life.

(The Modern Prince, Antonio Gramsci 1971 , 184)

Because it had begun as local and affirmative, assuming an unproblematic extension for its own local and community experience to a much more general movement, it was always insufficiently aware of the quite systematic obstacles which stood in the way.

(Resources of Hope, Raymond Williams 1989, 115)

In his pre-prison writings on “The Southern Question,” Antonio Gramsci ruminates on how the peasant classes of Southern Italy could be brought into a hegemonic allegiance with the industrial working classes against the bourgeoisie that exploited them both (Gramsci 2005 [1926]). At the risk of doing great violence to his theorizing, but in the spirit of his emphasis on understanding the historically determined nature of questions, in this chapter I replay a less grandiose southern question to ask if Southern California (Los Angeles) can be a center of change in the politics of the agro-food system? Compared to its neighbor to the North, the famously liberal, environmentalist, hot bed of food revolutions that is the San Francisco Bay Area (Walker 2007), Los Angeles appears as the conservative, ecological nightmare, culturally underdeveloped city of the South. These are caricatures to be sure, but on national stage, not far off from how the two regions are understood. In this chapter, I delve into the politics of the food renaissance as they play out in Los Angeles to show that there is potential for a radical food politics to emerge from the city, but it is constantly hindered by the (at best) apolitical and (at worst) neoliberal attitudes of urban foodies.

The other more serious note I take from Gramsci’s thoughts on the Southern Question is his emphasis that any radical change in the social relations of rural areas necessarily requires the transformation of urban, industrial relations in order to both provide a destination for the products of agriculture and remove the bourgeois intuitions of banks and “parasitic industries” that control rural areas ((Gramsci 2005, 28). In the second half of this chapter, the role of the *city* in shaping the overall agro-food system through explicit political choices is taken up with case of the Los Angeles Food Policy Council.

An Inciting Incident: The South Central Farm

Any Hollywood film with a plot—and how can one write of Los Angeles without reverting to cinematic metaphors?—contains an *inciting incident*, a moment when the inevitable conflict of the story is revealed. The narrative pivots from simply establishing characters and a setting to revealing what the characters want

and the obstacles that must be overcome. In LA's food renaissance, that moment would inarguably be the bulldozing of the South Central Farm in 2006. By no means was it the first time food had come to the center of politics in Los Angeles. But the fight for the South Central Farm is the moment that food activists point to most often in the city's history that reveals what is at stake in the city. It is an essential piece of the origin story for the movement, the moment around which everyone can rally and draw their lineage and legitimation from, regardless of any direct connection to either the space of the farm or the farmers. In other words, while this dissertation is not about the South Central Farm *per se*,^{xxvii} it is inevitably the starting point for any conversation on Food Justice in Los Angeles and must be addressed.

Beyond the need to begin somewhere, the conflict of the South Central Farm draws out the complexity of the political question at the center of this dissertation: How does the regulation of urban space, especially by the State, shape the ideology and practice of urban food activists? And vice versa, how does the everyday experience of foodies in the (neoliberal) city shape the State? While watershed moments like the fight for the South Central Farm shed a bright light on the repressive dimensions of the State, it is in the details of disrupting the everyday practices of growing food in Los Angeles that the ordinariness of its unsettling impacts lie.

In 1987 the City of Los Angeles used eminent domain to acquire a 14-acre parcel of land in South LA, at the corner of 41st and Alameda, for the purpose of building a trash incinerator. In an unprecedented environmental justice victory, a small group of African-American women, led by community organizer Juanita Tate, became the first community coalition to ever stop the construction of an incinerator in a low-income neighborhood. Tate founded Concerned Citizens of Los Angeles and became a major force in LA grass-roots politics. For several years, the land for the incinerator was left vacant, filled with trash, rubble and the occasional homeless encampment.

The South Central Farm was officially founded in the wake of the urban uprising that swept through South LA in 1992. Doris Bloch of The Los Angeles Regional Food Bank started the garden with support from the USDA as part of a plan to help low-income residents of the neighborhood to supplement their budgets by producing some of their own food. Over the next decade, parcels on the farm were designated to approximately 350 families—almost entirely to older Latina/o families. Starting from the ruined foundations of an old warehouse, the farmers tore out debris, brought in and built up soil, and cultivated a remarkable number of crops including establishing numerous large fruit trees on some plots (Gottlieb 2007).

Then in 2002, Ralph Horowitz, the original owner of the land, sued the city under a legal provision that mandates that if the city was not using the land for the purpose for which they took it, they must offer to sell the land back to its original owner. Despite the courts ruling against him three times, the city decided to settle with Horowitz out of court. The settlement was kept secret and signed off by Jan Perry, *with* the understanding that 2 acres would be donated for a soccer field complex to be developed by Juanita Tate's community development corporation

Concerned Citizens. In February 2004, a notice was posted on the gates of the farm informing the farmers they had two months to vacate.

Over the following two years, the farmers waged a highly public battle to save the farm. At first their goal was simply to keep from being evicted, but as the movement escalated the priority shifted to buying the land itself. Rallying to their cause were a small progressive law firm, countless activists from the Los Angeles area and a near endless string of celebrities. The farm literally became a *cause célèbre*, as its court battles were covered in the mainstream media, concerts, rallies and vigils were held at the farm. Hundreds of thousands of dollars were raised to purchase the farm. In what can only be described as an alliance of convenience, Horowitz, Perry and Tate remained joined together in public and political opposition to the preservation of the farm—moving forward with their plan to evict the farmers and build a warehouse and soccer field.

Balanced delicately between both sides was a rather tenuous state apparatus. No one on the city council could risk taking on Jan Perry in her own district. At the same time, the newly elected Antonio Villaraigosa found himself politically unable or unwilling to put his full political support behind the farm at any given moment, even as he struggled to show allegiances to the Latino voters who had elected him. Finally, in February 2006, the struggle to save the farm came to an end. The courts overruled the last injunction giving the farmers access to the land, the property was legally Horowitz's and the only hope of not losing the farm was in raising the 16 million dollar asking price Horowitz had set for the property (3.2 times what he'd bought it for). The farmers had only raised several hundred thousand dollars, when, on the day before the scheduled eviction the Annenberg Foundation stepped in and offered to donate the necessary 15 million and purchase the land on behalf of the farmers. To the shock and horror of the farmers and their supporters, Horowitz refused to sell. The following morning LAPD arrived pre-dawn to remove the hundreds of protestors who had gathered around the farm. A few hours later, bulldozers knocked over the trees and plowed under the crops.

Horowitz, for his part, was unapologetic. Interviewed for the documentary on the South Central Farm, *The Garden*, he railed:

Even if they raised a hundred million dollars, this group could not buy this property. It's not about money. It's about 'I don't like their cause' and I don't like their conduct. So there's no price that I would sell it to them for. When does this kind of "you owe me" mentality end, and how good is that for America? Everybody says 'you owe me.' Is this good for our country, where everybody is owed and nobody is obligated? I don't see it. What they should have said to the taxpayers of Los Angeles and to me is "this is a gracious country, thank you very much for letting us have these gardens here, thank you, thank you thank you."

Today the land is still vacant. The plan to place a soccer field on the site fell through, as did Horowitz's proposal to build a warehouse for the local garment

manufacturer (and sweatshop operator) Forever 21. Members of the original South Central Farm are still working on plans to get the land back.



Aerial photos showing the South Central Farm at its peak and after demolition.
Source: ©2014 DigitalGlobe, U.S. Geological Survey, USDA Farm Service Agency, Map data © 2014 Google

Accidental Anarchism

That the food-system is broken has been well rehearsed over the past several decades in both popular and scholarly circles (Lappé, Collins, and Fowler 1978; Goodman and Watts 1997; Shiva 2000; Pollan 2007). The agro-industrial food system is not only destroying itself, but the environment, the economy, the health of everyone and the very social fabric itself (cf Schlosser 2001; S. Miller 2008; Ritzer 2011; Hauter 2012; Blay-Palmer 2012; Nestle 2013). The problems emerge from the practices of the global North and wreak havoc across every scale from the urban American body to the financial stability of whole nations (Watts and Goodman 1997; Buttel, Magdoff, and Foster 2000; Patel 2012; McMichael 2013). As Guthman (2011) argues, the proposed solutions to *some* dimensions of the broken food system have also been well rehearsed. Preoccupied with concerns over health and a sense of community, foodie activists in the US turn to "the local", organic, and fresh as means of consuming their way towards a new food system. This approach to addressing the injustices of the food system tends to oversimplify or ignore many problems with the system. The "Pollan" view of the system, despite its efforts to tackle political-economy, labor, and race fails to, in Guthman's words, put capitalism on the table (Guthman 2011, 196). The "activism" of urban foodies tends to (re)produce what appear as a neoliberal set of practices (Guthman 2008b; Allen 2008; Pudup 2008; Guthman 2008a). They rely heavily on market-based solutions—even when the market is "small or local"—and emphasize personal, rational consumer choices over community or social responsibility.

At the same time, as Hayes-Conroy (2008; 2010) has suggested, not all small, community based food practices are necessarily neoliberal in nature. We cannot become so focused on the effect as to miss the intent of such projects altogether. With this in mind, I suggest some food activists might be engaging in what I am, for lack of a better term, calling "accidental anarchism." They are suspicious of large, bureaucratic organizations (especially the government), cognizant of the excesses of capital (while largely uncritical of its internal contradictions) and deeply committed to something like mutual aid. That is, they embrace the idea that small groups of individuals can freely produce and share food, skills and knowledge. Almost none of

the proceeding is articulated in any sense of critical-Marxist or Anarchist theory, hence the *accidental* antecedent. All the same, foodies in LA are frequently striving for objectives somewhat askance of what otherwise appears as a purely neoliberal project.


The question of what is neoliberal, what is anarchistic, and why we might care to tell the difference, hinges on the question of how foodies perceive, encounter and react to the State. Beyond a purely theoretical or philosophical question, what is at stake here is the potential of food movements to create a shift in the hegemonic dimensions of the food system and, as I argue in chapter two, their lives in cities. I suggest that there are actually two politics, always in tension, that shape, enable and inhibit the urban food movement. First, at specific times and scales food activists reject the State as an effective agent of change *and* often cast it as the obstacle to progress. This is what I am calling accidental anarchism. The second kind of politics, by contrast, perceives the state as a weak, but necessary agent in urban struggles and an inescapable engine for growing the movement into a political force. These two politics coexist uneasily and are beset by their own paradoxes, which I attempt to explicate in the following two sections.

The scale on which activists interact with the State and the *urban* nature of those encounters shape their perceptions of what is possible. Drawing on Harvey's reading of "militant particularism" (2000, 172), that affirmative experiences at one location and scale get translated as universally beneficial, my concern is that the small victories of urban agriculturists over the local state in Los Angeles become extrapolated to a mistrust of the state at every level. The rollout of neoliberalism means that much of the government's role in providing social welfare and support has been slowly but surely eroded to the point that it seems logically preposterous to make demands of the government. In discussions with food activists almost no one even thought to suggest that it might be the responsibility (or necessity) of the State to remake urban food systems. It's not that they think it is impossible, but that it is impossible to think it in the first place. Where the dream of cooperatives and Soviets (in their original sense) once stood, now lies the promise that individual consumers with their powers combined will bend the market to their will.

"Nothing makes you a libertarian faster than trying to grow food in LA."

On a sunny January 2010 day, a group of several dozen foodies packed themselves into the common space of Vromen's bookstore in Pasadena. They were gathered to hear Robert Gottlieb and Erik Knutzen discuss "The New Food Activism." Gottlieb is the director of the Urban Environmental Policy Institute at Occidental College in Los Angeles which runs several food justice participatory action programs. He had recently coauthored with Anupama Joshi a book titled *Food Justice*. Erik Knutzen and his wife Kelly Coyne are local celebrities in the LA food scene, also known nationally for their Root Simple Blog (see chapter 4) and their book *The Urban Homestead*. Their new book *Radical Home Economics for the Post-Consumer World* was set to come out in May.^{xxviii} The event itself was hosted by members of the perennially under development Aroyo Food Co-op. They were using the event as a way to spread the word about the co-op—trying to get membership

up to a critical mass of 500 so they could move forward with plans to open a brick and mortar storefront with thousands of co-owners. The context of the event itself reveals the tension of food politics in LA. The members of the future co-op want their project to do it all: at a basic level, be a grocery store that happens to be owned by its members and caters to their (bourgeois) tastes; connects their community to a broader struggle for Food Justice; but still remains firmly rooted in the a self-contained imaginary of Northeast Los Angeles.



The New Food Activism
The Arroyo Food Co-op presents authors Robert Gottlieb and Erik Knutzen

Gottlieb (*Food Justice*) and Knutzen (*The Urban Homestead*) will speak on “The New Food Activism” and how it relates to local efforts, such as the current plan to open a community-owned market in the Pasadena/Altadena area.

A mini-market will accompany the event, featuring items from local food and craft artisans, like Mothercluck (jams, jellies and preserves), that will provide a “taste” of what the Arroyo Food Co-op will offer when it opens.

Excerpt from e-mail promoting the “The New Food Activism” event.

Source: *personal communication*

Gottlieb spoke first. For all intents and purposes he summarized the *Food Justice* book (2011). He laid out eloquently how unjust the food system was from seed to table in terms of labor abuses, the health and economies of communities, and in its links to global inequity. Walking the audience through the empowering tale of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) in Florida and the looming threat of Walmart’s incursion into inner cities as a purveyor of “healthy” food, he laid out a clear agenda for food justice as a movement towards social justice. What’s needed, he argued, is worker organizing across the food sector, community development using food justice as a lens, and improving access to healthier food through programs like farm-to-institution. The coop-oriented audience tisked at all of the injustices, but the question and answer period revealed that their interest lay far from political organizing. They wanted to know how to get immigrants to make food trucks healthier, how to get consumers to understand externalities so they didn’t have sticker shock at the (future) coop, and what he thought of Jaime Oliver (see chapter 4) coming to town. The co-op, and all that it represented, remained the *consumer* oriented alternative to the evils engendered by Walmart. Opting out of the food system, rather than engaging with it, remained the politics on the table.

Erik, by contrast, opened by saying he was not an activist but a “how-to kind of guy.” It was not meant to dismiss activists per se, but to position himself with

regards to the title of the event. He identified himself as a “typical lefty Californian” but did not think that political or other persuasions necessarily dictate one’s relationship to food. He had two take-home points: First, that he, that we, could not change what happens in Washington, D.C. That we ought to forget about D.C.; and Sacramento and focus on the things we can change in our neighborhoods and own yards. Nonetheless, at the same time, that it was possible to change a lot at the local level, especially in Los Angeles. He did not put urban gardening or small markets forward as the salve for all of society’s problems. It is, however, a way of (re)making a community and one’s place in it. Throughout his talk, and more generally in the writing on their blog, there remains a somewhat fatalistic sense that the world has gone to hell in hand basket, but that we might survive with a little *common sense*. But, as we shall see shortly, politics find their way back in, even to the life of Erik Knutzen.

Erik’s framework of “common sense” appears, in various forms, frequently in conversations with urban foodies. The idea is they have *it*. There is a common sense to growing your own food. It does not make sense to spend a fortune on highly processed junk from the supermarket. It makes sense to have urban land dedicated to this kind of local food production. It does not make sense to have agrochemical laws and empty lots. It makes sense to teach kids about where food comes from, how to eat healthy, and so on. The entire rubric of “local, healthy, organic and sustainable” all fits under a notion of common sense.^{xxix} My point here is not to dispute the merits of any of the practices or approaches put forth under the rubric of “common sense”—frankly I find the argument compelling and subversively anti-capitalist at times—but to point towards what people and entities are explicitly construed as lacking common sense. According to foodies, what lacks common sense are bureaucracies, particularly government bureaucrats. The perception of the food movement is that the State makes no sense at all and, worse, is perpetually getting in the way of common sense. And they might be right.

Later in the year, biking back from a meeting of the newly formed Los Angeles Bread Bakers group, Erik Knutzen jokingly remarked, “Nothing makes you a libertarian faster than trying to grow food in Los Angeles.” At the meeting (which Erik had biked eight miles to while hauling close to a hundred pounds of rare California Sonora wheat) we had discussed plans to build a community oven, ways to get types of wheat that were not just the blends from the grocery store, and the recent health department raid of a local baker and shop who had been selling unpermitted loaves. After the meeting, the health inspector debate expanded into a more general conversation about the absurd morass of regulations in LA and California that seemed to constantly favor the industrial agro-food system over the small producer, communal exchange or home grower. The general sense was none of the baker-gardener-foodies were doing anything that complicated (or dangerous) but the regulatory systems at the neighborhood, city, county, state and federal levels were so complicated, contradictory and unevenly enforced that it was not even worth trying to follow them. Whether it was trading homemade jams, setting up water harvesting systems or raising chickens, the general consensus was to just hope for the best—and fight the city when you had to.

Around the same time, Green Grounds was having its own debate about what to do about the local government. One of the first front-yard gardens they had planted in South LA, at Ron Finley's house, included a number of plantings in the space between the sidewalk and the curb, which in LA is known as the parkway. The area is technically the property of the city, but residents are expected to maintain it, under a very strict set of guidelines (Residential Parkway Guidelines.) A neighbor who had previously had disagreements with Finley called the city to complain about the garden as it matured. An officer from the Bureau of Street Services came out to the house, inspected the flowers and filed a report. A few weeks later, Ron received a citation saying he was in violation of city code and required to cut down the flowers or face fines and possible arrest. Members of Green Grounds were incensed. First, the city was interfering in what was, essentially, a dispute amongst neighbors. One of the guiding principles of Green Grounds is that planting gardens in *front yards* is a way to bring neighbors together, help people meet each other and feel connected. They felt their member had done a good service to the community and a cranky neighbor should not be allowed to undo it. Second, the notion that the city had the time, resources and authority to enforce what went into a parkway felt like a cruel misplacing of priorities. The city is so broke that it can barely provide other services. As one member put it, the city can't clean the broken glass and trash out of the street and parkway, but wouldn't let them beautify it or make it useful. As with the Bread Bakers and Knutzen, the Green Grounders felt it was best to disregard the city government until it came after them. Finley thought he could talk to someone in his council member's office and get the whole thing sorted out. He had been given the option of applying for a variance and await a hearing, but the process would have cost hundreds of dollars. Other members of the group pushed hard to take the matter to the city council to get the whole municipal code revised around matters of urban agriculture. Amongst the back forth over the best course, the general consensus was that there was something wrong with the government that it simply interfered when not wanted and failed to show up when it was needed. In general terms, the Neoliberal State makes its presence known at the minutest scales and in everyday ways. The effect is as always to reproduce the ideology—the answer to a neoliberal state always seems to be to further chip away at it.

Tara Kolla, the matron of Silverlake Farms, knew all too well the frustration felt by her fellow urban gardeners and foodies. In the early 2000s Kolla had converted her large back yard in Silverlake to a small flower farm and composting business. One set of neighbors, ironically the editors of the neighborhood's "Green Magazine," didn't like the compost, but could not find any real way to get her to stop. She was quite insistent that the composting was done correctly and thus there was no odor or pests, but they had it in their minds to put an end to the project and the conflict escalated. What her neighbors found, instead, was an unenforced 1946 ordinance regulating truck farming in Los Angeles that prohibited the sale of fruit or flowers grown within the city.^{xxx} Kolla had been selling organic flowers—a rarer commodity than one might expect— at the Silverlake farmers market and making decent money doing it. In May 2009, her neighbors convinced the city to shut her

down. Years later, Kolla still tears up with anger and sadness recalling the experience of losing not only some of her income, but the loss of the place she had made for herself, in both the sense of her flower farm at home and in the broader sense of in the broader community of LA.

Her neighbors were there to stay, but she could take on the government. Kolla called on the loose network of other food practitioners she knew, including Erik Knutzen, another urban gardener, and leaders from the Los Angeles Community Garden Council, and organized them into a campaign to challenge the ordinance. Calling themselves the Urban Food Advocates, they began showing up to City Council Hearings demanding that the planning commission amend the “Truck Farming Ordinance” to allow for the off-site sale of fruits, flowers and vegetables. They started a website and produced flyers encouraging people to come to hearings and tell the commission:

Urban farming gives Angelenos access to locally grown food and flowers; it promotes good stewardship of our land and goes one step further towards helping people of all backgrounds and means to help themselves in difficult economic times.

(Urban Farming Advocates, <http://www.urbanfarmingadvocates.org>)

The campaign took hold and they got a foot in the door with the city council. In May 2010, the council unanimously passed what its supporters called the Food And Flowers Freedom Act. Eric Garcetti, then council president, proudly proclaimed, “This makes sure that people can eat healthier and save money during these tough times, while at the same time setting clear rules to avoid any confusion with neighbors or the city. We hope this is a big step forward for urban farming here in Los Angeles, and across the nation” (“A word from LA City Council President” 2010).

To hear Knutzen tell it, the process was not that big of a deal, because no one on the council seemed to really know what truck gardening was or have any logical reason to object to the amendment allowing the freedom of food and flowers. The amending of the Truck Gardening Ordinance, as trivial as it might seem in the grand struggle to remake the food system, marked an important watershed in the LA urban food movement. It was the first moment in recent memory where collective action had successfully taken on the State on behalf of food producers. To emphasize the point, they demanded *less* regulation. A proposition the local State is often all too ready to accept as long as it does not inadvertently place the government in a position of legal liability for the deregulated practice. The Urban Farm Advocates did not seem particularly interested in building a long-term political campaign or organization (indeed their website has not been updated since the act passed) to further address issues in the food system. Rather they formed an accidental anarchistic group aimed at liberating one part of their collective practice from the oppression of the state

Urban food activists develop an ideological position towards the state vis-à-vis the food system through the minutia of everyday practices of producing food in

the city. Their homes, gardens and markets are all sites of intrusion by a State that provides them with little else in terms of support. To make matters worse, the experience of working with the city government is, for most urban citizens, something horrific to watch unfold. Participating in the city council often involves excruciating hours of empty speeches, city commendations to local businesses, glad-handing and passing pre-approved but unwanted policy. Activists often report arriving at city meetings only to find the agenda item they came to address has been moved off the agenda, or through some technical mechanism moved out of any public discussion. It is only, on occasion, through sheer necessity that they attempt to engage local bureaucrats, but many would rather “do it themselves” or “in their community,” where they can make what feel like real changes to their lives. The bad politics of city government become the bad politics of all government and are ideologically scaled up and out to the overall dysfunction of politics. Unfortunately, what is left to shape social life and spaces is the chaos of the market. It is in these ways we see neoliberalism reproduced from the ground up.

However, as I write this, the Los Angeles Bread Bakers have become increasingly involved with a campaign to pass a cottage food bill in California. AB 1616 is modeled on similar bills in 31 other states that would allow the home production for sale of small-batch, non-hazardous foodstuffs. For all of the talk of being local and anti-political, food actors like Erik Knutzen find themselves drawn back into the political fray. But as with the Flower and Food Freedom Act, everything is done rather ad hoc and without the traditional sense of politicking that accompanies typical campaigns for the environment or social justice. The anarchist/neoliberal food politic demands nothing more than the liberty to grow food and build local markets or communal barter. To return to Hayes-Conroy, we cannot dismiss all such moves as neoliberal even as they exist in ‘actually existing neoliberalism’, but must understand the underlying desire and agenda that drives actors to fight for their communal practices (2010). In this case, we are still very much slogging through neoliberal times, but new strategies of adaptation are emerging.

The general banality with which actors from the local government attempt to control agro-food spaces in LA belies a grossly uneven set of power relationships between different communities and the state. City agencies are, on paper, relatively even (or more accurately, random) in the geographic spread of where they ought to assert their force. A wealthy, white-run uncertified food stand is as open to being cited for violations as a working-class, African American’s unpermitted parkway garden. But while the underlying force may be the same, the effects vary significantly along lines of race and class. As I’ve argued in the first two chapters, the recalcitrant geographies of Los Angeles still inform and shape the social relations of the city as much as the landscape. So while many different urban food producers may dislike the State, their ability to resist, navigate or change its practices are in many ways constrained by their place in the city.

A telling example is the case of the Altadena “Underground” Urban Farmers market, which I addressed briefly as the hub of one part of the LA food renaissance in chapter two. The market, perhaps a dozen or so stands, was run out of the

driveway and a few empty rooms of the Zane Grey estate in Altadena.^{xxxi} The organizers of the monthly market had bought the house a few years earlier and begun to raise goats to make their own cheese. The production of animal products for sale is highly regulated in the United States, thus the Altadena cheese makers skirted the legality of their project by not technically selling the cheese. The idea of the market was to create a space for their friends and acquaintances to sell the food products they grew or made, many of whom would not normally have had access to similar markets. Due to regulations or simply being unable to produce at the scale a normal weekly farmers market might demand, many would-be urban food producers have no outlet for the products they make. The market served as a multi-purpose gathering place for a rapidly growing community of foodies in North-East LA and the valleys. It was not only a fun, informal market, but also workshop space for learning “food crafting” and de facto petting zoo where kids could come play with the goats.

But perhaps the most distinguishing feature of the market, which both customers and vendors twittered about amongst themselves, was that the proprietors of the market fully expected to be shut down at any moment. In fact, they talked about it with a sense of titillated excitement, as if the ever-present danger of getting busted gave their project legitimacy as a rebellious act. With a tinge of near libertarian indignation, the market found ways to subvert health codes and land use ordinances. Doing so was maybe not even necessary, but it lent the market an air of being *alternative* and subversive vis-à-vis the State—which was viewed as the handmaiden of the corporate agro-food system. Jarring pickles at home and growing heirloom radicchio was already constructed as a challenge to the latter, but selling them without state sanctioned approval was the ultimate act of escaping the bad food system. It is a perspective in relation to the state’s authority that is only afforded by a great deal of privilege.

Eventually the market grew and grew to the point that everyone was sure that parking along the residential streets of Altadena would become a problem. However, when inspectors from the health department did finally appear, they were quite charmed by the market (purportedly swayed by the BBQ sauce of one vendor) and while they insisted that the market become permitted as an event—though not necessarily certified as a market—the only thing that needed to change at the site was the installation of a few portable toilets to accommodate the hundreds of people flowing through every hour. The presumption, or attitude, was that the proprietors could essentially do what they wanted as long as they jumped through a few wide, low hoops.

By contrast the \$400 and up permits just to grow a few vegetables in a yard in South LA presented a serious potential barrier to carrying on such projects. It is not, however, simply a financial issue, but also social and political power to effect change. The members of Green Grounds were far less prepared to force City Hall to amend the code, even though it was discussed at various times, than the members of the Urban Farm Advocates. In these cases the stakes were relatively low, but if we return to where the chapter began with the South Central Farm, we see that the intersections of race and class can radically alter a community’s ability to defend its

commons from the State when it is drawn upon for its most brazen policing and “hand maiden of capital” roles.

Politics as Unusual: The Los Angeles Food Policy Council

There is no department of food and agriculture at the level of the city that could have jurisdiction over the above cases, nor, as should be obvious from the seeming randomness of enforcement, any sort of comprehensive policy regulating the food system in Los Angeles. Rather, foodies face a mish-mash of city and county zoning regulations; health codes set by the *County* Department of Health (there is no city agency in LA); tax requirements from the city, state and federal government; water policies set by the Department of Water and Power; and a whole host of other regulations that jump between scales, jurisdictions and departments. On the one hand, the situation is both necessary and not unique to urban food advocates. The State is not organized in such a way to empower a central food agency, in the way, say, a planning commission can set land uses. On the other hand, where something like a commercial development in Los Angeles would likely face the same barrage of regulatory hurdles, there are a whole set of apparatuses in place to facilitate the process of development. Teams of lawyers, government officials, and NGOs have a working understanding of what steps (and in what order) must be followed to see a project brought into being. At a smaller scale, someone building a house could relatively easily be guided through the process vis-à-vis the expectations of the State. But when someone wants to start a community garden, or settle a dispute with a neighbor about a garden in their yard, or establish and maintain a farmers market, or vend locally produced products, there are far fewer apparatus in place to guide them. Foodies find themselves facing their urban conditions rather haphazardly.

Two years ago, lawyers from the legal firm of the Roll Group offered to do a *pro-bono* assessment of regulations of food and agriculture in Los Angeles,^{xxxii} only to discover it would take a full-time team of lawyers months, if not years, to complete such a task. The offer had been made to the Los Angeles Food Policy Council (LAFPC), which for the past four years has been increasingly responsible for negotiating the relationship between the State and those interested in food and agricultural in Los Angeles. Without a staff of their own to undertake such an analysis, the project has fallen to the wayside, but the LAFPC has continued to move forward and play a major role in centralizing many of the concerns and frustrations, but also hopes, and ambitions of food advocates in the city—from urban agriculture to food vending (farmers markets, corner stores, fast food bans) to changing the way large institutions procure food.

Initially started as the “Good Food Task Force” in 2009, as an initiative of Mayor Villaraigosa, the LAFPC was officially convened in 2011. Food policy councils now exist in most major American cities, but take on very different forms. In some cities, they are official parts of the city government, tasked with writing food-related policy for the city. While, in other places, councils are completely independent with an advisory role to city and regional governments. The argument for a government affiliated council is that it gives the council more power to push policy forward, but

it becomes subject to internal politics city government and can easily exclude non-governmental actors with a stake in food policy. By contrast, independent councils have much less power to create or enforce actual policy, but maintain a level of independence to think more broadly about what is perhaps best for a city or region (C. Fox 2010). In all cases food policy councils present a significant institutionalization of food politics at the urban scale. I will argue below that they often (re)produce many of the neoliberal tropes endemic to food politics, but at the same time are an important step away from a wholly anarchist or libertarian approach to addressing food/urban politics.

The LAFPC was designed by Paula Daniels, the council's eventual director, as a hybrid of the above models. Mayor Villaragoisa appointed Daniels from her position as a Public Works Commissioner to be the Mayor's Senior adviser on food and water policy. This made her an official city employee, and means that the LAFPC is convened by the mayor's office. However, the council is an independent volunteer board consisting of 40 members from across the food system and city. There are representatives from locally focused food organizations, producers (both growers and processors), retail, restaurants and universities. Daniels' hope was that the independence of the board would free the organization from some city and legal bureaucracy (like having to notice and transcribe all meetings) while allowing her to be both broad and specific in who was "at the table." At the same time, her position within the city could keep the LAFPC in close relationship with the actual State functions and not simply an outsider group amongst many others lobbying for different city policies. To some extent, the strategy has worked well: the Food Policy Council has its main office on the 17th floor of City Hall, a critical physical proximity that allows the staff to keep a constant presence amongst city and county officials. But it also, at times, give the Food Policy Council the appearance of having more influence over policies in Los Angeles than any volunteer board or independent organization could ever dream of having –let alone an actual city agency. I will return to the difficulties of this contradictory identity in moment, as it has become the most criticized and potentially frustrating dimension of the LAFPC to food activists in Los Angeles.

Daniels and the members of the council have framed the work of the Los Angeles Food Policy Council around a broad concept of a "Good Food for All Agenda." They define this as supporting a "fair, affordable, healthy and sustainable food system." Tucked into the buzzwords of the food movement, the Good Food Agenda actually proposes a more serious examination of the food system than most mission statements. Notably, it foregrounds the economics of the food system above all else. Moreover, the "fair" category as they interpret it means, "All participants in the food supply chain receive fair compensation and fair treatment, free from exploitation" ("What Is Good Food?" 2013). As a chart they had produced for the last mayoral election (below) suggests, the strength and weakness of the agenda is that it necessarily encompasses a sprawling set of groups, interests and economies. The LAFPC use this to their advantage in that they can leverage wide ranging political support for their agenda from across sectors—as they did with the last election, where the council made it very clear to the incoming mayoral candidates how the "Good Food" agenda impacts and benefits everyone in Los Angeles. Their

engagement came with the implicit suggestion that the LAFPC was a political asset to the Mayors office, and that supporting good food policy is an increasingly politically palatable platform that requires little sacrifice from politicians.

Figure 9: Graphic produced for LAFPC Mayoral Race documents, Tarr, 2013



If the vagueness of its political identity is the LAFPC's first major hurdle; the second is the breadth of its mandate. Officially the council's objective is to "Coordinate, Catalyze and Connect" various actors around Good Food Agenda. One of the first complaints many food advocates have about the council is that the organization explicitly doesn't make policy, but is vaguely in an advisory role. But, more to the point, it has meant that council has taken a big-tent approach to the areas that they work on. The council is broken into several working groups that, ostensibly, are self-directing and convene quarterly to coordinate work. At its founding in 2011, the working groups covered the broad areas of everything from "urban agriculture" to "the good food economy." The breadth of focus areas is again suggestive of what is actually entailed in thinking holistically about remaking the food system *from an urban perspective*. Everything from urban land use policy, health code policies around vending, water allocation, large institutional procurement, and labor right enforcement falls under the purview of the council.

For the first two years, one staff member did the majority of the day-to-day work of the council. Paula Daniels has overseen much of the political work of the LAFPC, but Alexa Delwiche, a former United Farm Workers researcher with a degree in public policy, has been largely responsible for keeping the council together. Funded through block grants and what amount to in-kind donations of office space from the City and the Urban Environmental Policy Institute at Occidental College, the council has had one coordinator responsible for coordinating the council's working groups, building a website, grant and report writing, and the actual research and writing of policy recommendations. Herein lies the third major challenge for the council, related to the first two: the scope of the work could easily keep a large organization with a full staff occupied year round, but in the neoliberal climate and current configuration of the council as a semi-independent volunteer board, there just is not the funding for that kind of organization. Endemic to activism everywhere and the non-profit industrial complex, funding is always short for well intentioned projects and there is often an expectation that work will be done out of passion and commitment. In the realm of food politics, there is the additional myth that food itself is such a compelling and fundamental issue in people's lives that it is the *ur* issue that will bring everyone to the proverbial table. In the language of the Food Policy Council, it would appear possible to have a small, dedicated staff simply "coordinating, connecting and catalyzing" the foodies and food organizations already working in the city.

This is not to suggest that the Food Policy Council is ineffective. There is much work already being done that it need not reproduce. Nor should it presume to have oversight of that work by virtue of being a food policy council. But the structural context and conditions for a small peri-governmental organization tasked with remaking the food system are not insignificant. I will return in a moment to several explorations of where these challenges and contexts collide, but I want to detour briefly to the more abstract question of how geographic contexts affect the ability of the Los Angeles Food Policy Council to make real and lasting change in the food system. This is the question I argue is answered too rarely by both scholars of the food system and by food activists in general—and is a question where real answers could significantly alter the kinds of work done, if not approaches to how the work is done.

The "Good Food" agenda, the purpose of the Food Policy Council, is necessarily troubled by geography because the food system itself has been constructed over the centuries as an extraordinarily complex global system, while at the same time, Los Angeles itself is an unknowable entity, certainly from a political perspective. These challenges have two overlapping response amongst food advocates. First is the "vote with your fork" strategy, which conflates consumer choice with democratic engagement and argues that by purchasing the right foods, the rest of the system will fall in line. Second is the "eat local" strategy, which conflates a smaller scale (a city, neighborhood, "foodshed") with a simpler, more manageable system—one that can be *known* and thus made more just. Both approaches have been widely touted by food activists, as well as more broadly in the overlapping environmental movement, and sharply criticized from both the left and the right. What is at stake here is less how individual consumers conduct their personal eating habits (event

though there are long debates being had over that question), but how these strategies are incorporated into the political expectations and realities between foodies and the Food Policy Council.

In terms of scale, the impact of one council in one city seems like a drop in a bucket in the overall system. But Los Angeles is the second largest city in the United States and an important global, so changes in the way it interacts—as a city—with the food system could potentially have significant impact on how other cities and pieces of the food system interact. This logic undergirds the essential purpose of the council. A lot of farms, firms and infrastructure have to be in place to feed the millions of people in Los Angeles and Southern California. The corollary, under a capitalist mode of production, is that for those invested in the food system to make a profit they have to meet the demand of the market that is a major city. This is the “vote with your fork” strategy of the food movement scaled to the collective body of the city. If the city itself can be made to “vote” for “good food,” the rest of the system will have to listen. While still very much of the Liberal-market logic, this thrust of the LAFPC shows the council’s implicit understanding that changing the food system is not simply about changing Los Angeles. The question of how to provide a healthy, sustainable diet to Los Angeles cannot be addressed internally alone; the city is necessarily part of a much larger and more complex food system. But it makes the work of the council that much more complicated and at times Sisyphean. For example: the LAFPC would like to support growers with good labor standards and that use less pesticides. But, in the state of California there are few pre-existing resources to find such growers, let alone verify and track their labor and ecological practices. Once growers are identified, some institution needs to negotiate contracts with the growers and coordinate moving their products to the market of millions of Angelenos, while keeping those carefully produced and selected products affordable. It is certainly more than a handful of LAFPC staff can take on. They must necessarily rely on creating policy that “incentivize” other actors to build better systems to feed the city.

While the staff of the LAFPC is grappling with the geographic complexity of the food system through a scaled-up “vote with your fork” strategy, the allure of the “eat local” strategy has been more responsible for engaging food activists in the city. Of the working groups, the fastest growing (though it has come with high turnover) and arguably most visible has been the “urban agriculture” group. Given the seemingly impossible political situation at the federal level,^{xxxiii} the unbridled power of corporations and capital in general over the politics of food and agriculture in California, and the daily practices of growing/making food locally (see chapter 2 and the first half of this chapter), the “local” appears as a logical place in which to focus political action. For many foodies this means that their desire is that the Food Policy Council will be dedicated to facilitating (easing) the growth and production of food in the city, or nearby, as its primary goal. So, again, the problem arises that what many food activists want is actually different urban planning and zoning and health policies, a lessening of restrictions, rather than a grand civic policy to leverage million of consumers into altering the overall food system. Or, to put it in different terms, the “right to the city” and “food justice” become muddled concepts here, but ones worth parsing out for the sake of moving forward both analytics and agendas.

I have over-simplified the problem here for the sake of analysis, since the LAFPC and its members argue for some combination of both a broad and locally focused strategy. Anti-hunger activists in particular are good at seeing the need for both. But it is worth laying out the dichotomy because there are actually different issues at hand when it comes to the difficult position the Food Policy Council finds itself in vis-à-vis their agendas. Moreover, in the few illustrations that follow, it helps us to see how the council risks reproducing the Achilles heels of previous food movements in the city: assuming that the geography of Los Angeles—the always alluring vision that LA is bringing the pastoral-future—can somehow triumph over the internal contradictions and power of Capital.

The most compelling, but fraught, example of this challenge is the regional food hub project that the LAFPC contributes to. While technically an independent project with its own staff housed at the Urban Environmental Policy Institute, the regional food hub's design and progress is the responsibility of the Food Policy Council. The idea behind a food hub, and this point it is still only an idea, is that the hub would aggregate products from small and medium sized growers within a specified range of the city and then coordinate their sale in the city. Its primary customers would likely be large institutional buyers like the school district or retailers. It is a plan to intentionally remake the food system in the region by providing direct logistical support to sustainable producers who are otherwise unable to achieve economies of scale on their own and gain widespread access to urban markets. At the same time, the goal is to make “good food” much more widely accessible to the average and low-income citizen who would otherwise be priced out of local and organic food because of high production costs/the pursuit of premiums. Food Hubs are a territorial strategy for rethinking the food system, placing the emphasis not necessarily on hyper-local urban agriculture for provisioning, but on supporting diversified regional production. In other words, it is an “eat local” strategy, but a more nuanced and necessarily contradictory approach.

In practical terms, organizing a regional food hub turns out to be a difficult thing to do. A number of questions immediately arise. Because it is designed to augment or replace a “failed market,” a food hub needs to have its own mechanisms for pricing products: who will do this and how? If the food hub is to cover a region as large as Los Angeles, does it make sense to have an actual facility that is the hub, or smaller facilities all over the region that are in a hub and spoke model, or a purely virtual hub that is effectively a website that allows for sophisticated aggregation and distribution of foodstuffs? On the consumption side, the planners of the hub were concerned with who was going to buy the food from the hub: Is it dedicated to large institutional purchases (see below on the Good Food Procurement policy), or are retailers like Whole Foods going to buy out large quantities of products, with the hub doing a lot of the work for them of sourcing from small growers? As of this writing, the Los Angeles Food Hub team was still conducting in-depth research to try to answer as many these questions as possible—a process which is going to take years, and is frustrating to food activists around the city who are excited about the broad concept of the hub, but not necessarily as engaged with what it entails.

More fundamentally, the Los Angeles food hub must grapple with the contradiction at its core: that it is a market based solution to a set of perceived

market failures. On one hand, the “market” has driven large scale, petro-chemical intensive agriculture to the top of the power structure. On the other, good food is too expensive for all but the wealthiest people in the city. Without going into too much detail, these are not failures, so much as the logic of Capital. Agribusiness can produce food cheaply and at a high profit. Food produced in more labor-intensive forms (i.e., without chemicals, under diversified cropping, with safe and humane working conditions) is more expensive because labor is almost always the most expensive part of production. To put a food hub in the middle does not necessarily resolve either of those problems *unless* there is stream of capital from outside the market. But it has never been the intention of food hubs to be dependent on foundation dependent or large investments from the State itself (which I would argue is necessary and advisable). As Weisman has remarked, the model with projects like the food hub is to provide seed money to address a market imbalance, with the assumption that the project will build itself into a self-sustaining system. But it is an absurd logic, because the whole problem in the first place is that a free and unregulated market will always tend to head in the opposite direction, because that is where profit lies (Weissman et al. 2013).

Until, as Julie Guthman puts it, capitalism is on the table, projects like the Food Hub will continue to struggle to find stability without a complete reworking of the profit-driven form of food production that we currently have. It turns out to be very difficult to make a profit producing food at all, let alone in “sustainable” ways, so someone is going to have to pay for a new system and keep paying for it. One obvious and politically impossible solution would be to have State owned and operated farms. It would mean that corporations would not make profit from agriculture. Growers would have to become public workers. It would allow for a fundamentally unprofitable enterprise to produce better food for low-income people without destroying the planet. But that dream is a long ways off, if not total fantasy, given the current political and ideological structures of the United States. In the meant time, the Los Angeles Food Policy Council is continuing to explore other avenues to engage and alter the food system.

By far the Food Policy Council’s most successful project of the last three years was getting the City of Los Angeles to commit to a “Good Food Procurement Policy.” The policy is a small step towards the long term of goal of using LA’s size to change the overall food system, but one that reveals the intricacies of what is involved in such change. The policy is effectively a non-binding resolution on the part of the city council agreeing to encourage city agencies to ensure that at least 5% of the food they serve is sourced under “good food” guidelines. The percentage is low, but would represent a significant change in the funds agencies spend on food sourcing. The development of a technical set of good food procurement guidelines is the most significant piece of the policy. The guidelines are broken into five categories: (1) local economies, (2) environmental sustainability, (3) valued workforce, (4) animal welfare, and (5) nutrition. The guidelines are structure like LEED certification. A contractor is ranked in each of the categories for an overall score. So, for example, a grower who used no synthetic fertilizers or pesticides could receive a high score in environmental sustainable category, with more points if they were within a certain

number of miles of Los Angeles. But if the business did not have good labor policies in place, it would not receive an overall high score. As critics are quick to point out, and council members readily admit, there are no ideal producers by the Good Food metrics.^{xxxiv} In response, advocates of the policy argue that the policy will encourage and make space for growers and producers who need access to a better market. That is, if the City itself becomes a consumer of good food, it will signal to food producers that they can and should be engaging in better practices, which will benefit not only the city government but all consumers in Los Angeles. Moreover, the LAFPC sees it as a first step, with the hope to raise the percentages of Good Food procured over time with buy-in from more actors.

In several ways, the Good Food Procurement Policy is a major departure from how “food politics” is imagined by many food activists. First it is a *policy*, one with broad reaching implications and long term institutional investment, rather than the lifting of some restriction or the cutting of some subsidy. Second, it necessarily forces both greater transparency on the part of food providers and means there will be more public record keeping of how the food system—at least the part provisioning the city government of Los Angeles—functions. This means that the government itself is taking on greater responsibility for monitoring and regulating the “local” food system, rather than delegating it to consumers.

The policy still falls within a Liberal logic, with incentives rather than regulations being the primary tool with which the policy impacts the food system. The structure of the local state has as much to do with this arrangement as some overriding neoliberal ideology on the part of the Food Policy Council (many of whom are actually quite opposed to the neoliberalization of the food system in general). The Los Angeles city government has no jurisdiction to regulate pesticide use in Imperial County, even if the produce being grown there is being shipped directly to Los Angeles; but the city can give a Good Food star to a grower who uses less petroleum based fertilizers and offer them a better contract, encouraging other growers to do the same. Similarly, it is the Department of Labor that should be enforcing good labor conditions and fair wages at processing plants (even if that plant is inside of Los Angeles), so long as there is no criminal misconduct at a plant, the City has very little power to enforce certain kinds of regulations (though the recent growth of “living wage” ordinances is starting to change that landscape). But, again, it can privilege contracts with producers who can demonstrate better labor practices. How verification will work is a thorny problem beyond the scope of this study, but the LAFPC will, like most certification programs, be dependent on 3rd party verification. In some cases a UFW contract would indicate better labor practices, while in other cases Pesticide Watch reports may be used for environmental certification, while a high level of self reporting may turn out to be the norm.

But the question remains, why has food policy been devolved to the scale of the city government? One partial answer is that the scale at which a more progressive food agenda can be advanced *appears* to be at the municipal level. The influence of agro-food and the restaurant lobbies at the federal and state level is well documented (Weber 2009; Nestle 2013). As noted above, some of the most atrocious and recalcitrant agendas with regards to the food system are advanced at these levels – crop subsidies, support for GMOs, water privatization, and, most

blatantly of all, the explicit exemption of those sectors from minimum wage and standard labor laws. Politicos in Los Angeles are not as beholden to corporations like Monsanto, Cargill, or cotton growers as in “agricultural regions,” though agribusiness families like the Reznicks are major power players in L.A.. Nor are their constituents necessarily that concerned about the price of corn or global trade agreements. So when the Los Angeles Food Policy council consults with actors across food sectors—from growers, to processors, to distributors, to Labor, to advocacy organizations like the Food Chain Workers Alliance—to put forward a “Good Food” policy, it is relatively easy for city politicians and agencies to support it, without raising the ire of too many people. This is not to suggest that policy was simply a win-win, plopped on the table and everyone is happy sort of deal; the policy was carefully negotiated by Daniels, Delwiche and others on the LAFPC with the various agencies in the city and county over several years.

And therein lies the rub. Politics as usual at city hall is not the kind of “politics” that the food activists tend to do. A multi-year negotiated agreement with multiple stakeholders, careful calculations of just how much to ask for without risking getting nothing – these are not “common sense” approaches to changing the food system. And more explicitly, they are not necessarily about changing how food is grown and produced *in* Los Angeles. There is very little in the Good Food Procurement policy that would prevent a South Central Farm scenario, help Green Grounds grow their movement, or help farmers markets become more sustainable directly. In short, it’s not about the urban pastoral imagination that invigorates the Angelenos who care deeply about food and agriculture.

When I spoke with foodies in Los Angeles, they were often dismissive of the Food Policy Council. The usual complaint was that the council did very little for them. They saw getting involved as a way of distracting them from their more important work of gardening. Often, they had gone to one or two meetings and felt like the LAFPC was moving too slowly and it had too many projects that weren’t their interests, or that it was not clear how to “get more involved” in a way that would help effect the change they were hoping for in the food system. More critical were the food activists who found the organization too “political,” not in the sense of having explicitly political agendas, but in the sense of being a politician’s pet project. To them, the LAFPC appeared as a hollow body used by the Mayor’s office and City Council to greenwash themselves without committing to serious change. For many, this meant just eyeing the council with a strong sense of suspicion and simply avoiding it. For a few others, especially coming out of community-organizing backgrounds, it meant that, while they continued to engage the council, they had to orient their work towards steering the working groups to meaningful work, rather than hollow gestures (see below on Good Food Day).

The divisions between those outside the LAFPC and those who are on the council arise in part from the contradictions inherent to food politics. The conflicts are not restricted to an inside/outside dichotomy with the council. There are significant tensions and miscommunications about the trajectory of the “food movement” from within the council, as well, some of which is a result of the direct engagement of more urban-ag focused activists. For example, members of Green Grounds have joined the Urban Agriculture working group and been very vocal that the main

thrust of the LAFPC should be around land use regulations, facilitating more community gardens, and similar projects. Whereas the council has up to this point had a much broader, institutional focus. But there are more subtle and perhaps destabilizing confusions that arise from ideological differences over what “food politics” should be. The promise and peril of food, as an abstract concept, is that using “everyone eats” as the universalizing trope means that people can be using the same language around food, agriculture, and the warmly comforting idea that everyone is on the same page because they all agree that food is important and should be produced in “better” ways, but they can be meaning very different things.

This was laid bare in 2011 when an outreach committee was planning a Good Food Day, a citywide celebration of their local agenda to be part of a national push by food activists to create a “Food Day” in the vein of “Earth Day”. The project was to be run out of the Mayor’s office. One LAFPC member, who operates some of the most successful high-end LA restaurants, had assumed they were planning a gala event, with celebrities and politicians and the press to draw attention to the cause. Another member countered that the whole point of the Good Food Day was supposed to be about providing equal access to healthy food to everyone, and that an event like that would be far too exclusionary and send the wrong message. The first member, totally misunderstanding the concern, suggested that maybe there could be taco trucks outside the event for those who could not afford to attend but wanted to participate. Serious debate then ensued about whether food trucks would, in fact, be even worse than simply excluding the majority of the city’s population from “Good Food Day” activities. At the core of the debate was the ongoing tension between a trickle-down, symbolic form of change in the food system—a tactic of high profile exposure to promote Good Food as a popular idea, versus a more grass roots, community organizing mentality, calling for tactics explicitly aimed at structural change. This is particularly jarring example, but it is indicative of the broader tension within food politics in Los Angeles, and in particular with the food policy council. It is similar to the tension between Green Ground’s front-yard-gardens as highly visible but localized political act and the LAFPC’s subtle, intricate and markedly less territorial plans for a good food procurement policy.

What is important to note here is that the tension is not necessarily unresolvable because of some internal contradiction. At one level, the problem is semantics; “food” means too many things to different actors, the food system is too large and complex to be contained succinctly in an abstraction like the “food system.” So frustration arises from people simply talking past each other, or more often, thinking they are talking about the same thing only to discover they have very different understandings of what is going on or should be happening. Going beyond semantics, however, there is a potentially irresolvable problem of ideology and politics. I have tried, in this chapter, to show the distinction between imagining a new food system as an urban project and a multiscale project seen from an *urban* perspective: Los Angeles as its own model agrarian ecosystem versus Los Angeles as model of future best practices for all cities. But we could think of the dichotomy more broadly as a question of how socio-economic change should be brought about, a fundamental question of how politics should be done. The spectrum of Radical to

Liberal to Libertarian becomes muddled when we turn to questions of food politics. The hyper-local gardeners with little regard for property rules can appear as anarchistic, but lack a larger structural analysis of that which limits them. On the other hand, the Liberal, state-centric Food Policy Council has developed a rather sophisticated understanding of structural issues, lacks the political will to push a radical agenda for changes of the 'right-to-the-city' around food and agriculture.

Politics as Usual: No more Food Fights?

"Since at least the French Revolution, politicians have understood that if food prices get too high, heads will roll." – Michael Pollan

The demise of the South Central Farm has left an undeniable impression on the political landscape of Los Angeles. By way of a brief conclusion to this chapter, the above tensions and conversations were not present in the same ways before the South Central Farm. There are new spaces for food politics to happen in Los Angeles now. As Chapter 1 demonstrates, food and agriculture have always been a significant part of the city's identity, and while there was not a total lapse between the end of WWII and 1992, the mainstream political space of food discussion has come back in distinctive ways over the past decade. This is, in part, due to a national cultural shift / food conversation of the sort spawned from the works of Pollan, Patel, Lappé, Bitman and Schlosser and similar food writers. But it is also because grassroots urban agriculture and food activists in the city of Los Angeles have put the issue on the table. Food has, in mainstream political parlance, become an "issue." Admittedly, politicians clearly try to steer it towards a feel good issue—everyone likes food, especially good, healthy food—so simple gestures towards good food are easy ways to garner support. But there is also an element of fear, because the public image of several prominent politicians in LA were noticeably tarnished the wake of the South Central Farm debacle.



Mayoral Candidate Eric Garcetti at the opening of a new community garden in the Glasell Park Neighborhood.
Photo by Alex Tarr, 2011

Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, who had been newly elected just as the South Central Farm was becoming a public fight, was perceived to have failed to protect his Latino constituents who helped him be elected as the first Latino mayor of Los Angeles in the modern era. So it was with great fanfare that he created the Good Food Task Force, and subsequent Food Policy Council. Both have been hyped as part of his outgoing legacy as he steps down from 8 years as mayor in 2013. Similarly, Jan Perry, the councilwoman who was deeply embattled against the South Central Farmers, turned

around to pass a landmark ban on new fast food restaurants in South Los Angeles. As she prepared to run for mayor in 2012,^{xxxv} she was actively participating in “healthy food” and community gardening focused events around the city. Likewise, her main competition for the mayor’s office—and eventual winner of the race—Eric Garcetti campaigned hard at sites like the opening of new community gardens to show his support for urban agriculture and the food movement in general. It was his office that negotiated the conspicuously public agreement to keep the Hollywood Farmers Market in its home. All of these examples are simply to suggest that the political climate of the city is such that being on the “right side” of food politics is increasingly important—and may offer a narrow but significant opening for more radical food and right to the city activists.

Some politically engaged gardeners and food activists are well aware of the potential shortcomings of the new food agenda. As one long time gardening activist complained to me, in the 1970s they had started gardens as a way of bringing people in disinvested south and east LA neighborhoods into community organizing. The gardens were intended as a physical space to organize around, but with the intention of building serious place-based organizing capacity amongst working class communities. A project that actually had some, if limited success. By contrast, he complained, today community gardens and similar projects are increasingly tied to directives from national health organizations like the American Heart Association, who have less interest in the city as they do in demonstrating the success of their grants in the form of metrics around obesity and diabetes. This kind of food politics is a dead end at best, and sinister slipping quickly towards eugenics at its worst.

Even these limited imaginations of a new food politics have their openings for radical change, however. At a recent mini-conference put on by the Community Health Coalition (CHC) called “Reimagining Open Space,” community organizers made it clear that they were more than willing to use healthy city language as a tool to get control of land in the city. As with the gardener above, organizers were already adept at making the leap from the political request for a healthier population to asking the city property assessor how much vacant and tax delinquent land was on the rolls, land that could be appropriated and donated to community groups for gardens, farms, or parks. There was a clear sense in the room that these were not ends in themselves, though there were clearly significant health and environmental racism issues on the table at the same time, but steps towards more community based control of the spaces that their members lived and worked in. As Gottlieb and Joshi (2010) have argued for in terms of “Food Justice,” the great hope is that food can be one of several key issues that progressive politics can be organized through. Moreover, in line with Milkman’s argument that there is a uniquely LA Model of organizing (Milkman, Bloom, and Narro 2013), albeit in a slightly different valance, the loose network of activists around food who move in and out of other activist circles may be particularly well suited to seeing a broad, urban “Food Justice” movement develop.

It is easy to be cynical about the mainstream political machinations of City government and its ability to effect real change in the food system. But, organizations like the Food Policy Council might represent the first seeds of building larger, more institutionalized forms of change to the food system. It is, at the very

least, a place for the wide factions of the food movements, who far too often speak past each other or miss each other all together, to be in the same room at the same time (literally and metaphorically speaking). The Academic Left has been highly critical of cultural food politics for ignoring labor issues, the food wing of the environmental movement for ignoring race and class, urban gardeners from engaging seriously and realistically with anti-hunger advocates, and generally, of the food movements for being fragmentary. Food politics have a long way to go to bring all of those dimensions together, but there is that glimmer of potential that was not there before. If, as Joshi and Gottlieb have argued, food justice can move us towards social justice, it is a worthwhile seed to have planted. We will have to wait and see what fruit it bears.

xxvii The story of the farm has provided fertile ground for LA based researchers for the last few years, including the very good work of Barraclough (2009), Irazábal and Punja (2009), and the Academy Award nominated documentary *The Garden* (2009).

xxviii It is worth noting that neither Joshi nor Coyne were present. The gendered division of labor in the food movement, while not the focus of this work, casts a long shadow over the politics of the movement.

xxix What does not fit, at least not as easily, is any sense of labor justice. Paying workers in the food system a higher wage and ensuring safe work conditions turns out to be harder to frame in the common sense type language, as much as it might seem like it ought to be. Easier is to suggest that they shouldn't have to have those jobs at all. Raising, again, the extent to which the local food movement can help agricultural labor.

xxx The perplexing nature of the ordinance is that it allows for vegetables to be grown and sold. Unfortunately much of LA's policy is not codified, so there has not been a straightforward way of determining the origin of the policy. Indexes at the City Archives did not provide any clues, but it likely has to do with either Japanese truck farmers and/or the transition out of the victory-garden era and efforts to support agribusiness.

xxxi Zane Grey was a famous writer of pulp western novels and films who had bought the mansion and remodeled it to fit the Western aesthetic of his books.

xxxii The motivations of one of the state's largest and most powerful agricultural families are suspect at best. The company has been in an ongoing dispute with companies like Ocean Spray about the labeling of fruit juices and has put a lot of money and time behind pushing truth-in-labeling and bans on sugary drinks, which would help the sales of two of their major brands: Fiji Water and Pom Wonderful. At the same time, Mrs. Resnick would seem to have a genuine interest in supporting diversified and alternative forms of agriculture, helping fund alternative agriculture programs. Moreover, when I visited their offices in Los Angeles, all of the food in the cafeteria was priced to incentivize more local and "healthier" choices.

xxxiii The brutal battles over the "Farm Bill" every few years are just one piece of evidence of how intractable the problems of Food Policy are at the federal level.

xxxiv The only medium size grower with a UFW contract, organic certification and diversified agriculture in California is Swanton Berry Farms, and they are several hundred miles from Los Angeles in Santa Cruz. So even they would not receive the highest possible certification under the Good Food Procurement Policy.

xxxv She, like her main competitor Eric Garcetti, had both served on the council for twelve years and had termed out, so were vying for the mayors office to stay in the LA City political game.

Chapter 4: The Garden in the Machine

We may be going back to the land, but many of us are bringing our laptops and smart phones.

The Eat Well Guide's Cultivating the Web: High Tech Tools for the Sustainable Food Movement.

Do not think that you can build it [cyberspace], as though it were a public construction project. You cannot. It is an act of nature and it grows itself through our collective actions.

John Perry Barlow, "A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace", Davos, 1996

Down on the Server Farm: Contradictions in the web and food movements

The 2008 Pixar/Disney film *Wall•E* takes place in a not-quite-post-apocalyptic future where human consumption has gone out of control. Extremely obese humans live in space on huge ships, while the surface of the earth is a barren wasteland of trash. On the spaceships, robots do everything for humans who spend their days floating on futuristic chaise lounges and eating junk food. On the surface of Earth robots work cleaning up trash and searching for signs of plant life. After a series of comedic and harrowing adventures, as well as a love story involving the film's eponymous robot, the film concludes with humans and robots returning to earth together to place a real life plant into the soil. The film's message is overtly a cautionary tale of excess, centered on the current hysteria over American consumerism and its relationship to the "obesity epidemic" (cf. Guthman 2011). But it is the film's solution to the potential dystopia that I want to emphasize. The techno-utopian fantasy of a robot as organic gardener tells us a great deal about how the relationship of agriculture, food and technology is being reimagined in the present moment. As the credits begin to role, a coda to the film plays out, showing humans and robots together beginning a new society—working side by side to reinvent agriculture, fishing and gathering. It is the age-old romantic story of retreating from the collapsing present to a simpler agrarian past, but with a twist. Fat, lazy humans are not just getting back in touch with their roots, learning the pleasures of working the soil, the rewards of their own labor; they are doing it with the assistance of small, human scale pieces of high-technology (see Fred Turner 2006 for critique of "human scale" technology). In the narrative, sentient machines simultaneously save us from the backbreaking technologies of plows and hoes and from the gluttonous destruction of huge tractors and combines. In the not too distant future, we can imagine, the right mix of the *right kind* of technology and human creativity will solve all of the most pressing social and ecological problems.

The *Wall•E* dystopia/utopia is still, mostly, science fiction and allegory. But we do live in a world that is increasingly mediated (in the sense of "negotiated" as well as "made of media") by machines. Most urban gardeners, farmers and foodies

do not have a small robot to help them turn the compost, but they are on their smart phones, laptops and other digital devices constantly. They are connected through small machines to a massive, global network of other people, machines, infrastructure, capital, and information. Today if someone wants to know if they should water their garden, they are more likely to check the weather app on a smartphone or computer than to tune into a weather report on the radio or consult an almanac. In the “digital age,” Marx’s concept of commodity fetishism has reached new valances of mystification of social relations (Dyer-Witheford 1999; Allmer 2015). The relationships between people do not just appear as the relationships between the objects they produce. But the ephemeral information they produce with those objects becomes commodities and appear as the relationship between people. So for example, the human labor in a blog post on gardening is doubly obfuscated: as the digital artifact (a blog post) created by a blogger circulates it simultaneously produces value (for companies like google, network providers, etc.) and creates the appearance of a relationship between “author” and “reader,” although it is really the relationship to the digital commodity that is created. And this is after the original obfuscation of the incredible amounts of embedded labor in the massive but largely invisible infrastructure of digital communications technology (Terranova 2004).

So even as the text itself may be seemingly dedicated to celebrating the productive nature of human creativity, it necessarily relies on a mass-produced piece of technology like a laptop or smart phone and the alienated relationship between the writer and reader. In this chapter, I argue that in both daily practice and political action, the appearance of digitally mediated interactions as social relations closes off possibilities for more radical or alternative relations to emerge. At the same time, those digitized interactions facilitate counterproductive utopian imaginaries in which race, class, gender and multiple forms of difference are no longer used as barrier to active participation. Because, the logic goes, technology does not discriminate and “everyone eats,” anyone and everyone should be able to join the movement and liberate themselves from the deadly industrial food system. The limitations and contradictions of this promise can look especially stark in the most committed corners of the food renaissance, where it understood to hold the promise of remaking all social relations. In short, machines might not be planting our organic seeds in a classless utopia imagined in WALL•E, but for many new foodies, it would be impossible to begin to learn or participate in the urban food renaissance without them.

In the context of this dissertation, to understand the extent to which this paradox goes without notice, take for example the website of the Los Angeles chapter of Slow Food USA. The organization recently launched a new and improved website for themselves. It includes information on how to become a member, links to local and national food advocacy campaigns, and lists of slow-food related restaurants, markets and events happening in the LA area. Though Slow Food USA does not necessarily share its Italian originators commitment to a Left (communist) politics, in the context of the American industrial food system its agenda appears quite radical and anti-industrial (Andrews 2008). They do include the Slow Food manifesto (translated from its original fierce Italian), which reads, in part:

Our century, which began and has developed under the insignia of industrial civilization, first invented the machine and then took it as its life model.

We are enslaved by speed and have all succumbed to the same insidious virus: Fast Life, which disrupts our habits, pervades the privacy of our homes, and forces us to eat Fast Foods.

To be worthy of the name, Homo Sapiens should rid himself of speed before it reduces him to a species in danger of extinction.

A firm defense of quiet material pleasure is the only way to oppose the universal folly of Fast Life.

May suitable doses of guaranteed sensual pleasure and slow, long-lasting enjoyment preserve us from the contagion of the multitude who mistake frenzy for efficiency. [...]

In the name of productivity, Fast Life has changed our way of being and threatens our environment and our landscapes. So Slow Food is now the only truly progressive answer.

(“About: Slow Food Los Angeles” 2015)

The manifesto and the entirety of the LA Slow Food website exist *materially* as a series of actual electrons on magnetic disks in a server somewhere in a nondescript office park outside of St. Louis, Missouri. To appear on a computer screen in Los Angeles, the manifesto traveled by electrons and light-wave from St. Louis to Denver to San Jose, then back to Chicago and through Plano and Richardson Texas, then finally down a telephone line into a router in an office and a short jump across a radio wave to my laptop in my LA apartment. The whole journey took somewhere between 65 and 66 *milliseconds*. Here is the Slow Food manifesto’s term “frenzy mistaken for efficiency” embodied.

If there is any part of contemporary human existence that takes machines as a “life model” it is the Internet. Virtual and real communities are established through the use of machines to discuss food and plants, but it is not simply hypocrisy—it is the digital era’s commodity fetish. Without moving sidewise into debates over whether the medium is the message (McLuhan and Powers 1989; Carey 1989; McLuhan, Fiore, and Agel 2001), or whether the master’s tools can be used to dismantle the master’s house, I want to suggest that there exists an unresolved (unresolvable) paradox in the relationship between alternative food systems and digital technology. Taking the slow food manifesto as exemplary of the critiques of the current food system—it is too big, too fast, too destructive, too unjust, too insensitive to local needs, tastes and conditions—there are two questions that emerge: what conditions created the food system as it is today, and what are the alternatives? However, the digital technologies that facilitate so much of the development and dissemination of this critique are not subjected to the same questions—how could they be, or should they be? My contention is that the food movement too often mistakes the symptom for the cause when it comes to understanding what is broken in the food system, creating what I discussed in the introduction as a “pre-industrial” imaginary. The same confusion happens when

digital technologies are deployed in the fantasy of a “new economy” to produce a “post-industrial” imaginary. When they are combined, they serve to further obfuscate the much deeper structural economic and political conditions that make both so appealing.

The Urban Food Digital Nexus

This chapter focuses on the moments in contemporary culture where the urban food movement goes online. The dissertation as whole examines how Los Angeles has repeatedly engaged food and agriculture as a lens to reimagine and produce different kinds of urban space and politics. That lens has changed significantly, I argue, in the contexts of the “digital age.” So while the current renaissance in urban food and agriculture draws on many of the same tropes as previous urban-agrarian imaginaries, the current historical-geographical conjecture does make it a different, unique, and with potentially different outcomes than previous incarnations of alternative agro-food systems. In that sense, this chapter focuses on the intersection of food and agriculture practices with digital (or cyber) culture, and urban space. Drawing on critical geography’s engagement with LeFebvre’s critique of everyday life (Lefebvre 2008 [1947])^{xxxvi} and the production of urban space (Lefebvre 1992; Lefebvre, Elden, and Brenner 2009), I ask what kinds of spaces are produced through the practice of online urban food practices? The answer begins with the notion that the movement back and forth between on and offline spaces in urban food practices that actually produce a new urban food space. Spaces that hail a universal appeal, but are potentially both more exclusionary and impermanent than they appear.

Networks of similarly minded, enthusiastic urban gardeners exist in cities all over the country and world. They engage in the seemingly mundane practice of sharing links to the latest trends in “urban homesteading,” advice on bee keeping, and pictures of the kale they grew in their back yard. That is, the paradox does not just manifest in moments of the manifesto and the machine from Slow Food, but in everyday digital practice involving the urban food movement. There is something, if we pause to consider it for more than a moment, very strange about posting pictures of homegrown vegetables to the Internet. On the one hand, the food movement claims an ethos of small-scale, anti-technological, local-community oriented practices. At its fringe, concepts like *urban homesteading*, suggest an even further withdrawal from modern, corporate, industrial society. In brief, the food movement embraces an imaginary pre-industrial world. On the other hand, the Internet is, at its core, a global and globalizing system, dependent on extraordinarily complex technological, state and corporate infrastructures. At its fringe, it’s a cyber-utopia that promises the liberation of human creativity from corporal life. In brief, the Internet embraces an imaginary of a post-industrial world.

The fusing of preindustrial practices with “postindustrial” imaginaries is not as paradoxical as it might first seem. The promises of social media and food movements share much in common: the promise of de-alienated labor and individual creativity, building communities through egalitarian sharing of ideas, and

a nascent ecotopia free from the destruction and injustices of industrial cities. This is the promise from WALL•E. In terms of digital technologies and practices, Fred Turner (2006) calls this ideology “digital utopianism.” In *From Counterculture to Cyberculture*, he argues that these concepts arose from specific historical and geographical origins in the Bay Area counterculture. According to his research, the “counter” culture produced in the “cyber” culture an explicitly anti-political, libertarian outlook that looks to small-scale technologies to enable and reproduce utopian communities. That is, the ideology that underlies much of the mainstream hopes and understanding of digital technology—particularly the Internet and mobile devices—emerged directly from the factions of the counterculture that formed communes, produced and circulated the Whole Earth Catalog. The hippies who eschewed the direct political engagements of the New Left for a belief that unconstrained (by the State and its large scale technologies) humanity could build a new kind of society through its natural tendency towards networks (both physical and metaphysical) – essentially a Liberal market ideology, with a new-age patina.

I infuse a more radical critique of the digital utopianism into Turner’s argument than he perhaps would have,^{xxxvii} but he does offer incisive guidance into how a dominant set of ideologies that grew with and inform how we perceive the Internet work to hold in tension (or simply overlook) its own contradictions. The Internet appears as both a universally accessible, open system that promises radical change through wide spread dissemination and adoption of the best ideas, while effectively relying on the same old (neo)liberal assumption that the free exchange of goods and ideas will produce a more meritocratic society (see Benkler 2006 for a more nuanced, yet optimistic version). Sadly, much of the food movement relies on the same ideological principals—and its no coincidence as both draw from the same well of the countercultural 60s and 70s—that the set of practices that *feel* liberatory to (mostly) white middle and upper class Americans *are taken* as universally liberating. On the one hand the promise of the digital/food utopianism is not necessarily flawed, as I suggested above, the implicit critique of alienation is powerful. But on the other, the logic not only fails to address serious structural inequalities along lines of difference, it actively masks the unequal power relations based on race, class and ethnicity by positing a universalism to both digital and gardening practices.

A blog post on urban homesteading does not come with a “Whites Only” sign or some other overtly racist language. And being a blog post, it is ostensibly accessible to anyone with access to the Internet. So, in theory, anyone who wanted to supplement their diet with home grown vegetables could read the post and begin to learn to garden and could be part of the “food movement,” thanks to the ubiquity of the web. Where the argument runs into trouble is the leap from “anyone can” to “everyone should” be able to (Nakamura 2002; Kolko, Nakamura, and Rodman 2013). Just because someone can read the post (assuming one has internet access and finds a particular food blog to be written in a style and tone that is at all culturally compelling) does not mean they have a house or other space to garden, time away from work and other responsibilities to do so, wages that support water and other material costs, and so on. The generic benefactor of an urban homestead implicitly has those things, which in the United States mean they implicitly have

privilege. Which is not to suggest the food movement does not include low-income people, people of color, or any other people excluded from privilege in the United States in, shaping it and making it into a radical movement. Both the food movement and cyber culture have been widely (and rightly) criticized for their racism and classism (see for e.g. A. H. Alkon 2012; Nakamura 2002). What I mean to emphasize here are the ways in which food and digital ideologies can work together to appear to be promising new and better social relations without actually addressing the underlying causes of injustice. As we will see below in the rest of this chapter, this has both innocuous effects on the kinds of practices that get circulated, but much more insidious impacts on how those practices are understood, promoted and used to side step more serious critiques of not only the food system, but the capitalist system it is a product of. The apparent accessibility of information transforms the problem from a systemic framework to personal failings. People within the food movement frequently express frustration that other people continue to eat fast food, grow suburban lawns, support “bad” urban policy, when there is so much compelling evidence to support alternatives that people are willfully ignoring or otherwise failing to access. In a perverse manner, this neoliberal logic embodied not only fails to address structural inequalities, but begins to justify them by accusing individuals of not taking advantage of the revolutionary potential of digital information and the new food politics.

Cities in Networks and Networks in Cities

Norman Klein has suggested that Los Angeles is the “most photographed and the least remembered city in the world” (1997, 250). When popular media want to demonstrate cosmopolitanism they use places like Manhattan or Paris that are immediately recognizable as those places, Detroit or New Orleans appear as tragic, once-great cities. Images of their landscapes identify them as places that are readily circulated to convey certain meanings. But for a generic urban landscape, for a landscape that can be circulated as an urban space without being signified as a particular place, Los Angeles has become the go to place. Certainly Los Angeles has its iconic spaces that are used to convey all sorts of meaning in popular media (such as the comedic effect in the Beverly Hillbillies from Chapter 1 and countless other TV shows and media). But it appears constantly in car commercials, TV shows and films, magazines, and other popular media as a blank urban backdrop onto which many different meanings can be painted. These blank, but urban spaces, become significant in the current moment as gardeners and foodies in Los Angeles engage national and international networks. Their specific experiences with gardening, farming and advocacy around food in Los Angeles are easily removed from their context of the city and circulated far and wide.

If LA’s specificity is already removed by popular media, the Internet doubly obfuscates it. Los Angeles appears so often as an unreal place, a place that could be any place. The fact that it appears generic makes it surprising at first that it would have such a specific role in giving birth to a set of place-based, particular set of food and agricultural practices. I will delve more specifically into why this matters in

several cases below, but for the time being, consider the difference between San Francisco's association with a food renaissance and Los Angeles's.

The third dimension of the argument in this chapter centers on the intersection of digital and food/agriculture practices being situated in specifically urban spaces. The impact of pervasive digital technologies in urban life is the topic of ongoing debate in both academic and popular literature, and writing that spans both. Beginning about twenty years ago, as the World Wide Web and electronic mail became part of everyday practices, some fretted about the growing digital divide as some groups escaped into virtual identities (Nakamura 2002); the potential to concentrate social power in those with access to the new flows of information (Castells 1996), the creation of a new class of virtual proletariat (Terranova 2004; Dyer-Witheford 1999); while others celebrated the dawn of a new technological age for urbanites (W. J. Mitchell 2000). In some ways, the emphasis in corporate capitalism on profits over innovation has tempered many of these predications. The Internet has become a pervasive part of many daily lives to be sure. In many spheres it has altered the way information and people interact. However, the underlying social order has not been remade in the last twenty years, nor have the radical predictions at the dawn of the technology come to pass. Rather than becoming a new virtual or augmented reality, digital media have, like so many media before, been driven by the need to advertise to consumers, and while creating interesting new user generated content, are increasingly controlled by a few major corporations.^{xxxviii} Still, the wide use of social media sites like facebook and twitter, along with other technologies lumped under the Web 2.0 moniker, have become so common place as to go almost unnoticed and under examined in our everyday urban practices. Throughout these debates, there have been both implicit and explicit assumptions about how digital technologies affect, create and disrupt communities—both virtual and real (Gruzd et al, 2011). For my part, I argue that we need to recognize that digital media are facilitating new and different kinds of communities, but they are in no way a radical break from previous forms of social organization. As will become clearer below, this is especially true for how food communities constitute themselves in cities.

Older work on the relationship between digital technology and urban life often centered around the use of computer technology to better manage life and the functions of the city (cf Aurigi 2005). There are a number of challenges in keeping up with the relationship between digital technology and urban life, from a theoretical perspective, as the technology tends to change much faster than academic trends do. So, for example, a relatively recent journal article, by academic standards, published in 2005 would make no reference to technologies like googlemaps, twitter or even iPhones—technologies that have become so pervasive in the last five years that they are easily taken for granted. The technological shifts are less important here than the theoretical ones. In the last several years there has been a return to some of the original promise of digital technology to create “smart cities” by using “big data” to make cities more legible and governable (Townsend 2013; Kitchin 2013; Shelton, Zook, and Wiig 2014).

Rather than understanding the relationship between digital technology and cities as a largely administrative one, I am bringing to bear here a scholarship concerned with making the city through everyday practices, especially in the formation of a “right to the city,” as it relates to digitally mediated experiences of the city. The “everydayness” can become a slippery concept though. As David Harvey recently reminded us in his reflections on LeFebvre’s original “right to the city” theory, Capital and the bourgeoisie also produce the city and they can claim their own rights to it. So, as much as twitter and community gardens can produce radical spaces (virtual and real) of community resistance in a city, there is nothing inherent to them that says they must (Harvey 2012). As this chapter shows, the actual urban/suburban spaces produced via gardens and the web can be of a much more, pun intended, garden variety—neither the elaborately constructed digital cities imagined in the late 90s nor the techno-utopias promised over the past few years. Even without mainframe controlled cities or Matrix like virtual reality, big-idea thinking about urbanism, technology and creativity has become (remained) a major point of discussion amongst the Technorati class that shapes so much of what appears online. The extreme popularity of thinkers like Richard Florida amongst urban planners, some academics, and the general public speaks to how much the relationship between cities and (Florida’s term) the creative class is at the forefront of people’s minds (Allen J. Scott 2006).

A revealing window onto this phenomenon is how cities and food have become especially popular topics at the annual Technology, Entertainment and Design (TED) conference. Hosted by the Silicon Valley based Sapling Foundation every year, a TED event consists of several highly curated and digestible 15-minute lectures of “ideas worth spreading.” Unlike most academic conferences, the lectures are presented as complete ideas, without being followed by question and answers or commentary. Attendance was originally \$4,000 and by invitation only, though now one can get a membership to attend for a mere \$6,000 a year. In addition to the talks, each year one presenter is given the TED prize (now \$1 million) to go out and “change the world.” For those who can’t attend the conference, the talks are now available online for free. The availability of the short videos becomes the self-fulfilling fantasy of TED; shared through email, facebook and twitter, the talks begin to live up to their moniker of being “worth spreading.” As a video spreads through social networks, both the content and the platform it arises from are infused with an essence of being significant and the best thinking on a particular question. In this sense they are the quintessential cultural object of the NeoLiberal, “post-industrial” society, built around the belief that the solution to any challenge in the world is a combination of technological and design fixes, popularized through social media -- and a healthy dose of capital in the form of the TED prize. Social problems are defined narrowly in economic terms, with information asymmetry being the root of all inequality and technology its natural solution. Thus, in 2012 the prize went not to an individual, but to the concept of City2.0, a “platform to allow citizens anywhere to participate in the creation of the City 2.0” (“About TED” 2013).

TED has spawned an entire series of mini conferences called TEDx events, which are independently organized series of talks that follow the strict rules of TED,

usually along a particular theme in a specific location. For example, TEDxManhattan in 2010 was organized entirely on the topic of "Changing the Way We Eat." What is curious about an event like TEDxManhattan, and the digital artifacts it produces, is how un-geographically specific they are. The videos and ideas contained in them about the relationship between food and cities circulate far from the event, through networks well beyond the space of Manhattan, the nominal focus of the conference. It is through these moments that cities, food and digital technologies converge to reshape not only each category, but the relationship between all three. Following food-movement oriented tweets in February 2010, the lineup and topics at TEDxManhattan sparked a lot of enthusiasm. Independent groups organized a dozen or so "watching parties" in Los Angeles. Watching parties were billed as being almost as good as the real thing: they are social like a TEDx conference, but because at TEDx events all you do as an audience member is listen, it is not terribly different than being there in the flesh.

The arrangement is worth further consideration: Angelenos interested in local food, using Internet based media to watch a conference about changing the global food system that is explicitly branded as TEDx*Manhattan*. On the one hand, this is the sort of regular activity that takes place via the web on a daily basis, but on the other, it raises all sorts of questions about how individuals experience their relationship to others in their city, their city to other cities, how food and agriculture mediate those relationships, and how they learn to understand those relationships in the first place. Put simply, it is both normal and bizarre to think that gardeners and food advocates in Los Angeles would look to Manhattan for ideas on rethinking the food system. It was of course not just Angelenos, but it is worth noting that of the two major US cities, Los Angeles has had a much more intimate relationship to agriculture in the 20th century than New York.

The ideas (the currency of TED) emerging from TEDxManhattan came from smart, articulate professionals and activists who fit easily into the mainstream of alternative agricultural activism. They covered topics from the Farm Bill and CAFOs to food deserts and school lunch programs—only a handful of which had anything to do with Manhattan directly. The conference was organized and sponsored by a group headed by the Glynwood Institute (a sustainable agriculture focused NGO), several key names in "Big Organic," and a financial consulting firm.^{xxxix} The corporate sponsorship via Manhattan marks a mainstreaming of some fairly radical ideas around the food-system. This is worth noting because as much as the food system consists of farms and farmers, urban consumers and the financial firms that back them play a significant role in dictating how the system is structured. If powerful actors in Manhattan (or Los Angeles, as discussed in chapter 3) have changing attitudes about the food system, however small and slight they may be at this point, it matters more to the overall system that might appear at first glance. How those ideas form and circulate is a critical question to investigate.

Many of the TED talks discussed agricultural fantasies and realities, but cities themselves remained very much on the table. Carolyn Steel, a British architect and writer gave a talk on the pressing question of "How to Feed a City." She had actually

given the presentation at a different TED event and it was rebroadcast at TEDxManhattan, further reproducing the “ideas worth spreading” mantra. Steels' argument, which is often missed or misunderstood by urban food advocates, is that Agriculture and Urbanism are bound together, and have been from the very start. In a swift 15 minutes she took the audience through a complete, or as complete as one gets in 15 minutes, history of cities and food—including a good conversation on *Utopias* and Ebenezer Howard's *The Garden City*. She argues that what is good and useful in projects like *The Garden City*, is not the imaginary of an ideal place, but a project of understanding urbanism through the framework of how a city is fed. The framework however is recursive, it posits a starting point in which the flow of information is at the core of social structures (a Liberal idea deeply embedded in TED). With this logic, cities and how a city is fed becomes a question of how information about food flows. This loops back onto itself to suggest a framework of understanding the city through food and technology. Which is all to say that the blending of cities, food and digital technology are not something that happen by accident, or subconsciously in some post-modern false consciousness, but are actively curated and created as a common sense in the spaces and practices of TED.

Throughout this chapter, I argue that there are a number of problems that arise at this juncture. First and foremost is the erasure of geographic specificity, and the important sense that spaces are uneven. This is a practical problem in the sphere of daily practice. Los Angeles is a different place than Bangor, Maine, and growing tomatoes is a very different proposition in each place, even if they are connected by the same foodie website. But stemming from and reinforcing this practical problem is the deeper issue of the kinds of political imagination it engenders. Understanding a city via the Internet or through a garden can grossly oversimplify what lays at the root of urban problems—poverty, violence, health injustices—and severely limit, if not actively encourage resistance to, real change. I will return in a moment to the case of Green Ground's member Ron Finley becoming a national food movement celebrity through TED and social media. Finley's experience show how quickly a hyper-local dispute over growing sunflowers in a patch of dirt can become a national discussion over the need for low-income communities of color to grow their own food as a form of socio-political resilience. There are national conversations to be had about food security and land-use policy, but there is something dangerous in the ways in which a TEDx talk on Los Angeles becomes a meme that leapfrogs over the more complicated historical and geographical structures that shape life in Los Angeles.

Urban Agriculture and Social Media as Situated Practice

Situated Communities of Practice

Alan Pred, in his efforts to reveal the fundamental-ness of situated practice writes, “Everybody has a body. No body is immaterial. Nobody can escape that fact. That being the case, all human action, every individual and collective practice, is situated. Or, because of our corpo-reality, because of our material embodiment

there is always a thereness, a somewhere-ness, a here-and-nowness to practice” (Pred 2005, 142). This clever wordplay has profound importance for those of us interested in understanding how those bodies, those people who live and make the real spaces of the city, understand the relationship between the “somewhere” they are and the virtual, online spaces they also inhabit. Drawing on Lave and Wenger’s concept of “communities of practice,” I argue that it is the shared practices on and offline that shape how urban agriculturists learn to participate in, and thus understand, their relations to the city itself. As Lave and Wenger explain, “a community of practice is a set of relations among persons, activity and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice” (1991) that is necessary community for the learning, and thus existence of knowledge, of any set of practices. To know how to garden or *be* online, one must participate in learning, which happens in and through a set of social relations that define the set of practices that constitute the knowledge—it is a dialectic structure that is both historically created and constitutive at any given time *and* place. Static concepts of “gardening,” “food,” or “Los Angeles” can not be plucked down from the ether and known or understood as bounded bodies of knowledge. By engaging in the communities around food and gardening in Los Angeles, the activists and foodies I spoke with actively constitute those practices and spaces through their participation in the community.

To put it all together in terms of this chapter, there are groups of individuals who physically exist in the territorial space that is Los Angeles, where they engage in a set of practices that include gardening, farming, going to farmers markets, baking, political advocacy around issues of food, *and* participating in online/social-media activities around all of the preceding. Reading them through Pred and LeFebvre, the practices they engage in are shaped by the context of the place they are while they are simultaneously producing the spaces they do the practices in. They are not doing it alone, they are necessarily engaging overlapping communities of practice. Communities of practice in the food renaissance do not necessarily need the Internet, but the overlapping and fuzzy nature of these communities is complicated through it. The knowledge to, for example, create and care for a sourdough starter in Los Angeles can really only exist through bakers *in* Los Angeles showing other bakers how to select the right flours, temperatures, feeding regimes, and so on. At the same time, a baker in Los Angeles may belong to the Los Angeles Bread Bakers Meet Up group—an online forum for bakers who occasionally get together to learn how to bake. The key point is this: knowledge of how to navigate and participate in the meetup.com website is *different* but necessary knowledge than the actual knowledge of baking. And this is where the community question comes into play, we can see there are (at least) two communities, even though they overlap significantly, organized around two actually distinct sets of practices.

What’s at stake in teasing out the practices of on and offline bread bakers is relatively low, but the example suggests what I want to delve deeper into with the rest of this chapter: the communities that exist around different digital and material practices constitute very different knowledges that are easily conflated into overly simplified truths about a place. Online communities of practice become confused with communities that do, or could, exist in Los Angeles. The knowledge created in

online, virtual space is mistakenly assumed to be of the real space of the city. As with the example above—in which garden practices popularized in Denmark and shared online are not necessarily useful in Los Angeles—the conflation of communities can disrupt “good” practices around food and gardening. But much more importantly, it can seriously impact how people understand the social relations and power structures of the city—which are not governed by the same social relations and power structures of the web, even as both influence each other. The second half of this chapter draws out why misunderstanding these relationships undermines the ability of the most ardent supporters of an alternative food system, to say nothing of stronger communities and sustainable cities, from realizing their visions

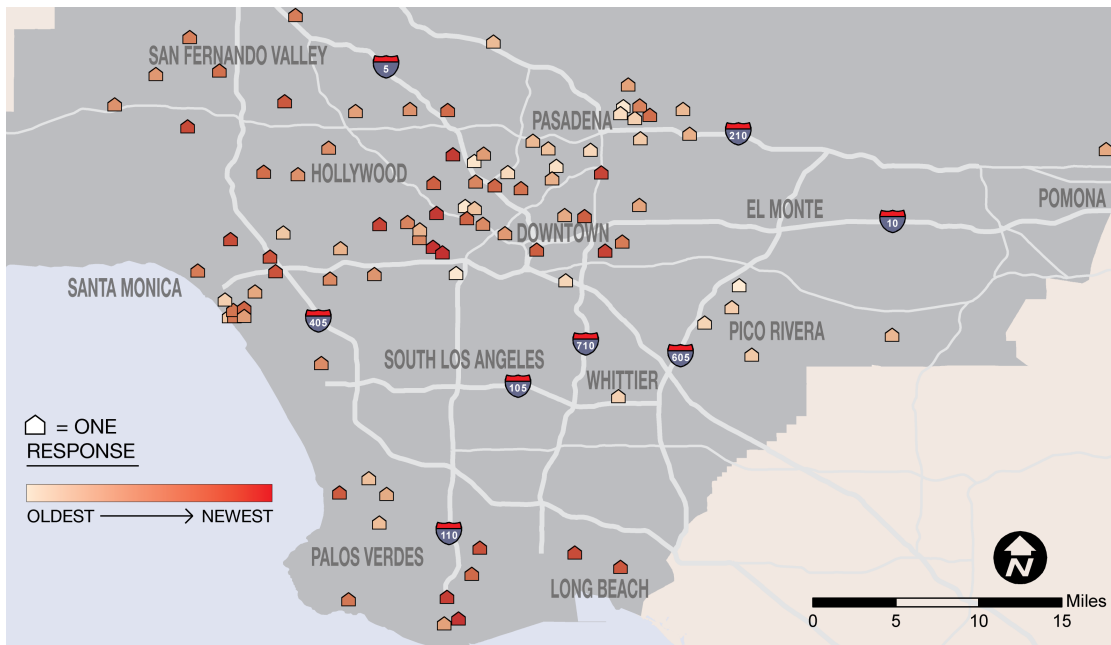
An Urban Gardening Geography:

There are physical geographies to digitally constituted networks of people that are inherently difficult to see “from the ground.” From the outside they can look completely spaceless. A single node in the network, that is an individual gardener or activist, does not necessarily have obvious reason to try and grasp where the other parts of the network exist. You do not need to know where everyone is to make sense of online community. To a point, this is a purpose of networks, to connect geographically disperse people without them having to share a physical space, or even an understanding of the physical spaces they are in (Colorado-Boulder et al. 1999). We have become relatively comfortable in the “digital age” with a set of networked experiences that are more than simple space-time compression. Where the electronic telegraph allowed a banker in New York to know details about the citrus crop in Los Angeles in unprecedented short times, thus connecting the two spaces in a shorter time; the digital network of cyberspace allows gardeners in the respective cities to share experiences virtually in a third place altogether that is seemingly no where. The same can be said of two bloggers on the same block in Los Angeles though. There is nothing qualitatively different in the experience of participating in a social network of foodies when communication is happening between people in the same city, and when they are on opposite sides of the Earth. And yet, there *are* differences in how that virtual space gets translated back into the physical spaces of the city and vice versa. And there are physical shared spaces, communities and experiences that these virtual practices take place in.

In this context, it can be an extremely useful to visualize the physical geography of a network, to “see” where the community that exists on line does its practices offline (Crampton et al. 2013 amongst the Cartography and GIS special issue on “Mapping Cyberspace and Social Networks”), and perhaps more interestingly, to see what those practices actually are—and again, there is significant difference between the practice of participating in an online community of gardeners and actually gardening. To this end, for this project I built an online survey of a loosely connected online community of foodies and gardeners in Los Angeles. The survey’s first purpose was to map how the survey moved through the networks. The goal was to literally map, in physical space, where people are, to see if and how a virtual network in Los Angeles had a geographic set of communities. A

link to the survey was shared via facebook pages, tweeted and e-mailed to organizations or individuals who are particularly active users of social media in my research. Thus, the survey was not meant to sample evenly across the entire region, but very intentionally highlight the spatial biases in the responses.

The second purpose of the survey was to gather a contextual understanding of how people who took the survey—the participants in the loose network—were engaging in food and agriculture activities in Los Angeles itself.



Map 1: Showing the order in which respondents completed the survey, and their location by zip code.

As Map 1 above illustrates, the spread of the survey across Los Angeles was uneven with some significant clustering on the Westside of Los Angeles (the Santa Monica – Venice area) and Pasadena areas. The uneven distribution of responses is in line with the basic notions of uneven geography; human settlements are lumpy across the landscape. What is interesting is where the clustering happens: in predominantly white and affluent areas of town. There are certainly outliers and exceptions, but the overall pattern suggests that as much as urban food movements like to imagine (hope) that they are growing everywhere, they are as uneven as the rest of the urban landscape. This is not to suggest that these are the only places that urban agriculture and food are of interest to Angelenos, hopefully the other chapters of this dissertation have demonstrated that there are in fact many, overlapping communities of practice across the city engaging in similar activities. The map shows digital social networks are not a-spatial, but have distinct geographies that, shape how foodies experience and understand the city.

What is at stake? By way of example, someone who posts from Santa Monica posts to facebook in English that they are having a tree pruning workshop that is open to the public, the “public” that gets the announcement via the social network is a very specific and limited subset of the people than the original poster may have

presumed to reach. This may seem self evident, that communities are often more selective and exclusive than they imagine, but as I have argued through this entire chapter the mythos of the digital network is that they overcome the exclusiveness and selectivity of communities—in theory, not praxis, most social networks are open to anyone who cares to join and participate. The daily practices of e-mail forwarding, sharing on Facebook, tweeting rely on the underlying assumption that a friend of a friend of a friend will do the same and the message, post, invitation, piece of information will spread indefinitely across all spaces. There are, it turns out, limits to the spreading, and those limits have effects.

How to draw boundaries around a social network is a difficult, if not impossible, question to answer. But it is enough to begin to ask how, why and where a piece of information—in this case a short survey about Angelenos' on/offline food practices—spreads in a city like Los Angeles. Moreover a differently designed survey would likely have traveled differently and in different communities (say, for example, if there had been the option to take the survey in one of the other dozens of languages spoke in Los Angeles), but again, this is the point, that specific pieces of information—and specific online practices—move through spaces in uneven, and unpredictable ways. The seemingly immaterial nature of the movement masks its significantly uneven geography.

We can also see, in Map 1, that the temporal asynchrony of survey responses can act to reinforce the perception that space-time has completely collapsed in the Internet. There is no spatial correlation to the time-direction that the survey spread. The first responses (lighter) are distributed almost randomly with regards to the later (darker) responses. So there *are* ontological differences in how digital network puts communities in relation to each other—a word of mouth, or even door-to-door survey would have moved very differently, even through the clumps shown on the map. With all of this abstracted discussion of space, time and networks laid out, the more interesting question remains—what is the actual experience of foodies as they move between on and offline practices?

The survey data itself begins to reveal how a particular set of gardening and food oriented Angelenos perceive their own practice vis-à-vis the city. Of the respondents, 82% grew at least some food for themselves, 17% do not yet, but would like to, and only one respondent neither has a garden nor wants one. So, the sample here is overwhelmingly people whose everyday life in the city is inflected, in some ways, by urban agriculture. I turn now to a discussion of how their experience as gardeners and “farmers” shapes the *urbanness* of their experience.

Over three quarters of those surveyed claimed they saw themselves as part of a “food movement.” But as the rest of the survey indicates, and my own conversations with many self-identified food movement participants, their practices on and offline are largely defined by their ability to grow food for themselves or their families at home, not necessarily as a larger political project. Of those who grew food, 78% were growing in their yards or in raised beds at home, 42% were growing in planters (rooftops, windowsills, patios), only 16% were growing food at community gardens. Ten respondents reported growing food at a school garden; one respondent is engaged in building gardens for healthcare at veteran’s hospitals.

Another explicitly noted that his school garden is on a local high school that used to be agricultural land that they are working to reclaim for food. Even more rebelliously, two respondents reported growing food illicitly in empty lots.

The vast majority of food growers were doing so at their own homes, or at a parent or friend's houses—but almost always at houses. This may not come as a surprise to those who see Los Angeles as an endless suburb of single-family homes, but it has significant implications for how a “food movement” actually thinks about and sees the future of urban spaces. Social media connect these individual gardeners, allowing them to share their interests across the space of the city without necessarily having to engage with the fact that much of the city is not defined by their yards – that is, there are no industrial (used or unused) spaces, commercial spaces, business spaces, public spaces—the spaces that define a city space as urban. Schoolyards may be the one exception, but in many ways these are envisioned to function more like home-yards as gardens than particularly urban spaces. I am not trying to argue here that these are necessarily bad, or wrong imaginings of a future city. Indeed, I argue that they connect in significant ways to the history of the garden city movement, but that it is important to make explicit what *kinds* of urban space are implied in these techno-agrarian practices.

A different way of looking at the question is in terms of urban economies. Urban agriculture is excitedly put forward in many contexts as a potential economic growth area. But there also seems to be very little evidence of a new agrarian economy emerging amongst the sampled gardeners. 90% of respondents grow food because it is a meaningful hobby, with almost as many (79%) reporting to grow food to supplement their diets. Just over half the respondents were sharing or trading food with friends, while only 12% were engaged in growing any food to sell. By contrast, only three respondents espoused an explicitly anti-market attitude towards gardening, wanting to “be free and self sufficient!!! My goal is to be 100% monetary free”, “to divest from capitalism”, and seeing gardening as “part of decolonizing our relationship to food and land.” Responses tended to be more along the lines of “I like knowing where my food is from. Picking it from the garden also focuses us on the general source of food (our earth) and the need not to waste it,” emphasizing the growers interest in interacting with the soil, having a relationship with plants, the joy of harvesting fresh foods. A second overlapping area of emphasis was on having access to food free of pesticides and other synthetic inputs. Many respondents also emphasized the importance of teaching others about nutritious food, especially their own and other children, while making it fun and interesting—indeed the majority of those surveyed had first learned to garden from their parents and grandparents, so the significance of continuing cultural practice and knowledge is not to be underestimated. These are, on the whole, important and meaningful motivations for urban agriculture, but reflect again the pre and postindustrial imagination coming together in the yard, with gardening serving as a tie back to a more natural, sustainable and healthy life more than refiguring central economic relations.

Returning to Pred's argument that all practice must be situated *somewhere*, the third potential pitfall of social media as they relate to food and the city is that they rarely are contextually specific. Of the blogs that respondents used to learn about food and gardening, less than half were based in Los Angeles, and of those only a handful were specifically focused on the city. Certainly a great deal of knowledge about food and gardening need not be so specific, and there is something to be said for national and international connectivity amongst urban agriculturalists, but I want to suggest that the geographic non-specificity of much social media does obfuscate the significance of local conditions. Beyond its ramifications for local horticulture (which is not particularly the issue here), this presents a paradox for urban gardeners: the practice they seek, and espouse, is intended to emphasize the local, the community, health and organic lifestyles, while the foundation of that community is largely defined without any sense of actual place, or in places that are not where they are. These contradictions do not necessarily undermine the intentions of gardeners, but must be resolved in some way through their practice and understanding of the city.

From Counterculture to Cyberculture – and back again

Two stars of the Los Angeles urban-food scene are Kelley Coyne and Erik Knudsen (who we met back in chapter 2), who blog under the names Mr. and Mrs. Homestead on their blog "RootSimple.Com." Mr and Mrs Homestead are fixtures at local gatherings on urban agriculture, homesteading, sustainability and generally hip events like openings at art galleries. They write and are often asked to speak about their experiences as urban homesteaders on their small lot in Silver Lake—Los Angeles's perennial Bohemian neighborhood. They cover topics such as gardening, canning, preserving, raising chickens, DIY cleaning supplies and cosmetics, biking and engaging in many of the other activities that have become markers of the urban-food renaissance. They are both witty and insightful and have a knack for making the challenges and frustrations of their lifestyle seem fun and rewarding.

While a notable presence in certain corners of the city itself, their more striking presence is on the Internet, where their blog is read far and wide. A recent post on the blog regarding the changing weather in LA solicited responses from: Whakatane, New Zealand; Blue Earth, MN; Seattle, WA; Kingston, WA, Oregon; "The Pacific Northwest"; Brooklyn, NY; Elmwood, MI; and of course Los Angeles (it is worth noting that several of these places are not "urban" by any stretch of the imagination). One reader, also a blogger, describes herself as, "[...] a green-living, bike-riding, bread-baking, book-reading, garden-making, crafty graphic designer" (Spangler 2011). The commentator identifies as the prototypical "creative class" individual who finds a shared set of practices in the site of Mr. and Mrs. Homestead. Along with the other readers of the blog, they form a loose, geographically dispersed community.

Mr. and Mrs. Homestead recently changed the name of the blog to homegrownevolution.com to better reflect their shifting philosophy of urban living.

They are more concerned with “common sense,” as Knudsen likes to put it, and less with the more confining and appropriated “urban homestead” idea (which I will return to in a moment). For the past several years they had been blogging at “HomesteadEvolution.Com.” However, they had started the blog as “SurviveLA.com.” When they published their first book in 2008, *Urban Homesteading: Your Guide to Self-sufficient Living in the Heart of the City*, their publisher was concerned that the LA part of the title was *too* local and would turn off potential readers. It is not that this is illogical, why would anyone outside of Los Angeles be particularly interested in a blog on growing food in Los Angeles? But the changing of the name to mask the LAness of the blog and subsequent book denotes the problematic relationship between localism as a practice and localism as an idea that is easily circulated.

But it is precisely the “urban” geography of a place like Silverlake that enables the type of Garden City imaginary that bloggers like the Mr. and Mrs. Homestead traffic in. In no small part because it was built out of Garden City-esque vision at the end of the 19th century, when the neighborhood was the semi-rural space 4 miles from downtown Los Angeles. Silverlake allows for a selected hailing of Los Angeles agrarians past. And because Silverlake has long been Los Angeles bohemian neighborhood, home to at various times large Communist, gay and arts communities (Hurrewitz, 2008). It is a neighborhood with many single-family homes on large plots (there are at least 3 operational farms and nurseries in Silverlake) and relatively affluent bohemian denizens. It is Urban in a Los Angeles sense. Not in a Jane Jacobs sense, nor in the post-industrial mythos of other American cities. But it presents the necessary conditions for imagining an urban homestead.

In physical Los Angeles, Mr. and Mrs. Homestead move in some of the same circles as Mark Fraunfelder. Fraunfelder is best known as the cofounder of *BoingBoing.Net*, which is often touted as the most popular blog on the Internet. Fraunfelder is also the editor in chief of *MAKE* magazine, the quintessential magazine for geek DIY culture. Most recently he published a book titled “*Made By Hand: Searching for Meaning in a Throw Away World*” (2010). It begins with his families failed attempt to move to the South Pacific to escape the stresses of modern life. While not particularly a book about urbanism, it chronicles his adoption of many of the same practices as Mr. and Mrs. Homestead in his suburban Los Angeles home—including gardening, bee keeping and raising chickens. These agrarian practices, in his telling, fall into a broader rubric of Do It Yourself (DIY). All these topics are also widely covered by him on BoingBoing.net and in talks he gives around the world. The book concludes:

The growing interest in DIY is charging a virtuous circle—individuals who make things enjoy documenting their projects online, which inspires others to try making them too.

I’ve joined this virtuous circle myself. Whenever I build a new guitar or a new gadget for my chicken coop, I post a description or a video about in on my blog. Many people have e-mailed me to let me know that my projects

have spurred them to do their own projects. They've told me that making things has changed the way they look at the world around them, opening new doors and presenting new opportunities to get deeply involved in the processes that require knowledge, skill building, creativity, critical thinking, decision making, risk taking, social interaction, and resourcefulness. They understand that when you do something yourself, the thing that changes most profoundly is you. (222-223)

Fraunfelder, like Mr. and Mrs. Homestead, projects a city occupied by people like themselves—and it is, I confess, an exceptionally compelling if not unrealistic imaginary. Their world offers, in the same sense of Howard's original Garden City, the marriage of the urban and the rural, the pastoral and the technological into a contented and sustainable society. That technology is imagined to bring about universal, utopian society has a long history in the United States (c.f. "The Mythos of the Electronic Revolution" in Carey 1989; L. Marx 1964; Fischer 1994). With regards to digital technology and alternative cultures, I follow the communications scholar Fred Turner here to argue that the imaginary of digital technology's symbiosis with alternative food practices, while enabled by the technology of the Internet, emerges from the ideology that surrounds the technology itself. There is not space here here to recount the nuance his argument, but in brief Turner (2006) traces a fascinating, if incomplete, lineage of how the ethos of the counterculture was transformed into the libertarian ideologies of the Internet. In his telling, a specific wing of the 1960s and 70s Bay Area counterculture (lead in his case by Stewart Brand) developed an ideology around small-scale technologies and back-to-the-land communitarianism that promised the dawn of a new consciousness and way of life. The Whole Earth Catalog was the embodiment of these ideas. As the communes fell apart, Brand and the Whole Earth Catalog transferred their energies into the Whole Earth 'Electronic Link (the WELL), one of the first "virtual communities" based in the Bay Area. Through shrewd business acumen on Brand's part, the WELL would come to define how people imagined the potentials and possibilities of the Internet, in part through its connection to WIRED magazine. Turner ultimately argues that the techn-utopianism of the Whole Earth Catalog became the libertarian / liberatory ideology surrounding the Web and digital technologies. My contention is that the Urban Homesteaders have come full circle, continuing to embrace certain forms of technology as emancipatory when combined with hyper-local practices of alternative gardens, architecture, and intentional (but ultimately structureless) communities.

The efforts of communities comprised of people like Fraunfelder and the homesteaders, in the real, material urban space they occupy, are towards something like a "New Garden City." But the digital technology and the ideologies associated with it continue to manifest the two contradictions I sketched out above. First is the contradiction wrought by a lack of geographic specificity. This is a straightforward and perhaps obvious point, but one oft too quickly dismissed in urban agriculture projects, that a practice or idea developed in one particular place is not necessarily practical or feasible in another. Social media users do not necessarily exhibit a coherent "spatial awareness" of their practices (Xu, Wong, and Yang 2013). The

second contradiction is a somewhat more subtle corollary to the first, but an equally critical sticking point: the social relations of a place are not arranged according to the cultural logic of the internet, but are more accurately reflected in the geography of that place. A compelling imaginary online rarely holds the same weight when it comes to transforming a material place. Being able to imagine a garden city is not the same as being able to control land in the sense of having one's own yard, or a public space with water, insurance and affordable tax rates. Nor does it allow one to affect the amount of leisure time in ones day necessary to maintain a "green" lifestyle—though there is a whole other mythology of gardening as a salve for the unemployed that is somewhat outside the purview of this paper. To put it briefly, good ideas are not enough.

Good Grief

We can see the problems between imagining new urban spaces and realizing them in the kind of work done by an organization like GOOD magazine. GOOD is a mostly LA based—though nationally focused—free, online media source that bridges the line between magazine, blog, and an aggregated collection of twitter feeds.^{x1} They cover many topics under the broad rubric of "doing good" in the world (in pluralistic sort of sense that wanders between Liberal and borderline Libertarian at times, across lighter cultural news to more in depth presentations of socio-economic concerns). Two of their most widely covered topics are urban sustainability and food. Like other websites of a similar bent, they specialize in aggregating a lot of other news and topics from the online zeitgeist and presenting them in novel, arguably more user-friendly ways. In short, they exist to aggregate a number of overlapping communities of practices of alterative food systems, sustainability (writ large), urban planning and various forms of cultural production into a quantifiable and legible group that can interface with "friendlier" forms of capitalism.

What makes GOOD unique, however, is their interest in organizing events in Los Angeles around the topics they cover. Not promotional events per se, though that is certainly an element of that present, but events that attempt to put the kinds of projects they promote into practice. So for example, when the Mayor of Los Angeles called for a city-wide day of volunteering, GOOD organized an event to have readers come build a school garden at a grade school in a low-income neighborhood south of downtown Los Angeles. Attendees ranged from young film-industry workers, a real-estate agent from Beverley Hills, the recently fired green director for the Los Angeles Unified School District, interns from GOOD and a young unemployed couple simply looking to meet other likeminded people and network. Parents from the school and their children volunteered in other parts of the school grounds, cleaning, repainting and planting already existing planters.

The school garden design was chosen from a competition sponsored and judged by one of Los Angeles top landscape architecture firms. And while there was a detailed plan for the layout of the site, there were no specific instructions for how to build the planters. While paid-interns from the Los Angeles Conservation Corps busily measured and sawed hundreds of boards, the ragtag group of GOOD

volunteers improvised the construction of planter boxes. Many had never worked with power tools before and had to learn on the spot. There was a lot of standing around chatting and a lot of serious mistakes in the construction. At the end of the day, less than a quarter of the planters were done, only one had been filled with dirt, and none of the planting had been completed. The Conservation Corps was going to have to come back the next week and finish the rest themselves. But the idea behind the GOOD plan was achieved in the abstract—a community had appeared in real space to make a garden. One of the volunteers produced a nice video of the day that was posted to their blog a few days later. The material practice and the digital artifact combined to give the appearance that Los Angeles could be imagined to be one step closer to its garden-ideal potential, even if the labor still remained largely undone.

Perhaps more revealing was a recent "Pop-Up Community Center" sponsored by GOOD as part of the launch of their LA- Local edition of their magazine. For one afternoon an old warehouse-turned-community-art-space was converted into GOODs curated bazaar. The center was a bit like visiting a real life version of the magazine, with booths set up by many of the groups that GOOD reports on, a marketplace of "local and artisanal" products, an Amstel Light sponsored bar, and lectures on topics of urban sustainability. It was the ideas of the Garden City translated into real space: Guerilla Gardeners, seed bombs, sustainability experts, edible lawn companies, local preserved foods, shoe recycling, screen printing, and even a hacker space group demonstrating a makerbot (a perennial favorite in the BoingBoing crowd).

The crowd reflected the neighborhood of the north-of-downtown LA, a lot of younger people that were markedly "hipster"—but also a generally pan bohemian community. The crowd was majority white, though not exclusively, it was a multiracial group in the way Los Angeles bohemian communities tend to be. But by no means a representative sampling of the city.

The geographic contradictions of moving from online to geographically specific spaces were on display in full at the event. One small but revealing example was the booth promoting an international guerilla sunflower-planting day on May 1st. The enthusiastic gardeners at the booth readily admitted that it was actually feasible to plant sunflowers on May Day in Los Angeles because of the climate—but that they were there to help people get starts going to plant some other time. Similarly, the booth operator noted that the Seed Bomb group (a widely popular idea nationally) was having similar difficulty creating seed bombs that were effective in LA's semi-arid climate. In more temperate climates, "seed bombers" make small dirt-grenades filled with various kinds of seeds that they toss into empty lots, parking medians and other spaces of unused dirt, with the hope that they'll grow into areas filled with wild flowers, or edible plants, depending on the group. Another woman from the Guerilla Gardeners explained that while their group had met with much success and popularity, especially in the media, they had trouble getting folks to come back to maintain the gardens they illicitly planted under the cover of night. On the one hand, they were disappointed that the participant's initial

excitement in the creation of a garden, more than the long term investment in the green space. On the other hand, they noted, they had only had one of the several dozen gardens they planted actually torn out. They also noted that they had had some engagement with "legitimate" attempts at setting up community gardens, but it had taken several years and too many meetings to create a space that they could have easily created overnight if they had just "done it."

The Guerilla Gardeners and the GOOD event expose the possible limits of their ideologies. The group imagines a Garden City for Los Angeles, and attempts to make it real—but quickly runs into the recalcitrant geography of Los Angeles. I am not suggesting that this means that the whole model should be thrown out, I am actually quite supportive of the argument that there is potential in the free sharing of broad ideas across the Internet as a way of imagining better cities, building new movements and empowering certain communities. The school garden GOOD tried to build does seem like a good idea, green space that serves educational and nutritional purposes is a vast improvement over blacktop asphalt that regularly reaches 150° in the Los Angeles sun. Converting empty lots into green spaces makes cities all the more livable in multiple ways. What I mean to suggest is that the Garden City imaginary is missing a critical component that enables it to do the work it seeks to do: and it should come as no surprise in this setting that what is missing is a better sense of geography and the complexity of how urban spaces are produced.

By way of a counterexample that proves the rule: a few weeks before the GOOD event was the "Reimagining Open Space" conference in South LA (discussed at the end of chapter 3). The conference organizers invited a large number of other activist-oriented community-benefit organizations from Los Angeles to a summit on rethinking what could be done with open space in their communities to make them more healthy. Present were groups that did community housing, land-trusts, health-organizing, bicycle advocates, and city representatives, as well as several invited speakers from other cities who were supposed to speak on how their cities (Detroit, Philadelphia) were taking on similar open space projects. As with the GOOD event, much of the conversation was around the possibility of community gardens as community spaces, beautification, and contributors to healthier lifestyles. However, the enthusiasm was much more tempered by frank conversations on the difficulties of acquiring land (even from a city government that would love to part with much of its expensive to maintain but non-tax-generating parcels), affording enough water for large gardens, insurance for public spaces, as well as making the spaces safe and accessible. At the CHC event the conversation was distinctly less about imagining an ideal city via imagined communities from the Internet and much more about addressing the very real pressing needs of the community it served. Both events took LA as their subject; both had versions of a Garden City as their imaginary, but with very different outcomes and audiences—so far.

Green Grounds Goes Global

In the spring of 2012, my facebook feed suddenly filled with links, images and quotes from Ron Finley, one of the cofounders of Green Grounds. Ron is already

well known amongst urban gardeners in Los Angeles as a champion of gardening in South Central Los Angeles. He first caught Angelenos' attention when he engaged in a very public fight with the city over his right to plant edible plants and flowers in the unused parkways between the street and sidewalks.^{xli} He became a national urban gardening champion at the end of February, when he was one of the featured speakers at TED. (Note, not a regional TEDx, but a main TED event). Ron gave an inspiring talk about the need for fresh food in areas like South Central Los Angeles, the potential for growing food in the spaces available around homes, and taking on both projects as part of a cultural program to remake the community. In the days and weeks following the talk, not only did links to the talk itself begin to circulate widely, but urban gardening enthusiasts began posting pictures of Ron with a quote from his talk: "Growing your own food is like printing your own money."

Ron had spoken for fifteen minutes, but for those who had not watched the whole presentation, the message was abstracted to "gardening is free wealth." The oft-repeated implication is that urban gardening is a path towards not just ecological and personal growth, but the perpetual dream of making money without having to work for someone else. As opposed to the possibly more accurate, but less romantic, interpretation that homegrown food and home printed money are both mostly valueless, if not illegal, in the real, formal economy. As I discuss above, critical food scholars, especially out of UC Santa Cruz, have shown how these logics around the agro-food system are symptomatic of ongoing rollouts of neoliberalism. Gardens can function to reinforce themes of individual choice and responsibility for health and economic security, while simultaneously undergirding the dismantling of state programs (Allen 2010; Guthman 2008b; Pudup 2008). By contrast, others have demonstrated the potential for radical and transformative impacts urban gardening might have on urban lives (Hayes-Conroy 2008; Heynen 2009). Most recently, McClintock has argued that urban agriculture might necessarily be both neoliberal *and* radical, and that to dismiss it as either is to be stubbornly unwilling to grapple with the messiness of internal contradictions in motivations and effects (2013). I am inclined to accept McClintock's conceit and argue that what is at stake here is less whether Ron specifically is somehow "right" or "wrong" about the potential of urban agriculture, whether his ideas are neoliberal or radical per se, but trying to understand how and why an artifact like Ron's talk gets taken up by urbanites, circulated amongst communities and how it effects their understanding of the city. That is, how an online community circulates a way of knowing and understanding the urban condition amongst themselves. Moreover, that all of these things are not done as specifically political project, but through the everyday practices of online social media and back yard gardening.

What is particularly at stake here is how the coupling of urban food movements and social media are shifting towards, or reinforcing, a-spatial and a-historical imaginaries of the city. In Ron's case, despite his attempts to give a quick-and-dirty context to his work, the geographic specificity of politics, history and social relations in Los Angeles are erased when the core motivation for urban gardening is reduced to *only* "growing food is printing money." We are left with a

vague notion that in any city at any time, those who grow their own food are economically independent and freer (in the most Liberal sense of the term) to live as urban citizens. Moreover, I argue, this confluence of social media circulation and abstracted urban agriculture has significant implications for how cities like Los Angeles are conceived and produced in the future.

In Conclusion: Garden City 2.0?

Lewis Mumford describes Howard's original imagining of the Garden City as the marriage of "town and country, rustic health, sanity and activity and urban knowledge, urban technical facility, urban political cooperation" (34). He also suggested the areas that would most benefit from Garden Cities were "particularly in California and the Pacific Northwest, where the tendency [is] to funnel the population into vast amorphous urban areas like Seattle, the San Francisco Bay Region, Portland and Los Angeles." The builders of Los Angeles agreed. As the preceding chapters have show, Los Angeles has always grown and been shaped around an agrarian identity. Moreover, that this blend of the rural and urban has always been produced as a counter-imaginary to other understandings of "urbanism" as dense, industrial cities. These garden city imaginaries have simultaneously promised to maintain a more rural, pre-urban set of values while paving the way for a new, different trajectory for cities.

Without pushing the analogy too far, *Garden Cities of To-Morrow* would have made an excellent TED talk: full of big, seemingly radical ideas just at the edge of utopianism, but meant to be pragmatic enough to be widely adopted. Moreover, like many TED talks, Howard's followers came to see the solution to social ills arising from design or systemic thinking, rather than a transformation of historically and geographically contingent social and political relations. There is not a specific lineage that connects TED to Howard, but there are deep currents in the history of American cities being shaped by what James Carey called "the technological sublime" (1989). Long before TED, planners and developers had elaborate networks of "big ideas worth spreading" that included many different varieties of technological fetishism. It is also worth noting that the day-to-day agrarian practices of many urbanites have much deeper roots than might first appear and have long been entangled with technological imaginations of the city.

If we were to imagine a garden city movement for the 21st century, it would embrace the same fundamental concerns and solutions, albeit with updated language: an urban geography of egalitarian social relations, ecological and economic sustainability, all bolstered by urban gardens, farmers markets, local craft and DIY artisans, bicycles and public transportation. Though unnamed, we see something akin to such a movement taking shape. The ideas are circulated from the real spaces of cities to the virtual spaces of the Internet and back into urban spaces everyday. In some ways this dialectic potentially serves to transcend the limits of geography. It allows urbanites to think past or around the confines of their built environment and local experience. But it also serves to prevent the actualization of these new urban visions precisely because it becomes disconnected from what creates the very geography it is meant to transform.

I want to conclude by arguing that there is difference between suggesting a different city is possible – one where social relations are not governed by capital, ecology is prioritized, labor is social—and making that world real. It is important to not confuse the former with the latter, as the real geographies of the city matter, and cannot be selectively embraced or ignored. On the one hand, it is easy with social media to quickly popularize a Ron Finley type meme—giving the appearance that the solution to a century and a half of racism and enforced poverty in a place like South LA is simply a matter of gardening (which, again, is not to suggest that gardens aren't or shouldn't be part of a renewed city, but that they cannot be an end into themselves). On the other, there are any number of quotidian gardening practices happening in a city like Los Angeles that do not necessarily make it “big” via social media, so remain somewhat invisible. These are not necessarily transformative towards the kind of socially and ecologically just city many of us would imagine, but *are* producing a particular kind of city around urban agriculture that should not be overlooked. This dissertation has been formed very much in conversation with the work of Julie Guthman, in particular her provocation that what limits the alternative food movement is its failure to engage the inherent contradictions of capitalism (2011, 196). She means in particular the structures that shape the overall food system, from the profit motives of the corporations that control production-distribution, to the labor conditions of workers in fields, factories and retail.

I want to extend her contention to the very urban fabric itself. The logics of capital constrain the potential of cities, as much as they make them giant, uneven and unsustainable. So it is the power of capital in the city that must ultimately be challenged if we want to not just imagine but build and inhabit more just and sustainable cities. But it is not an easy power to challenge—as history has proven. Today, the fetishism of the digital and the Internet are replete with capitalist logics as well. There are strands that resist and push back: the dominant forces that force agriculture into large, consolidated firms at the top with increasingly precarious labor at the bottom, work effectively to do the same in the digital sphere as well.^{xlii} This does not mean that they are one-in-the-same, or that both cannot be challenged from within. Indeed, the fanciful tale of WALL•E that I began the chapter with may very well suggest our future as cyborg (in Donna Harrawy's sense) gardeners. From this vantage, the task is to really grapple with how to simultaneously embrace the underlying desires of the techno-agrarian vision while not succumbing in either direction to the lure of pre-industrial and post-industrial fantasies. Staying grounded in the material reality of cities, everyday experiences and practices that shape them, which can and should include gardening and blogging, appears as an important place to start

^{xxxvi} Poster (2006) provides a helpful framing of LeFebvres' “critique of everyday life” for digital cultural studies.

^{xxxvii} Elsewhere he has expressed far more incisive views on how cyber culture is incisively against the building of institutions, and this is amongst its major flaws that prevent it from building systemic change. (F. Turner 2009; Fred Turner 2006)

xxxviii The debate has interestingly moved from concerns over whether people anonymously exist in virtual realities to concerns that no one has any privacy and some company, or the government records every aspect of our lives. Debates over digital divides continue to inform work on the Internet and related technologies, but the terms of the debate have shifted significantly as age and geography have turned out to be the most divisive variables in terms of access, though race and class are still critical concerns in how technologies are taken up/used.

xxxix The main sponsors of TEDxManhattan beyond the Glynwood Institute included Organic Valley Co, and major financial and risk management firms.

^{xl} GOOD has changed formats many times since being founded as a magazine. In its current iteration it has become even less of an original content site and more of a “social network” somewhere between Facebook and Tumblr for “sharing creative solutions and doing good.” Though it also works as a major corporate advising company at this point.

^{xli} Parkways in LA are technically government property, but adjacent property owners are required to maintain the space, albeit within very strict guidelines set by the City of Los Angeles. These guidelines increasingly restrict the desire of urban gardeners to grow the food they’d like where they like. Though growing in a parkway is in some ways intentionally about contesting urban space as much as producing more food.

^{xlii} See for example the work of Bob McChesney (1998; 2007) on the consolidation of media corporations and its impact on the shape and nature of the mass media.

Conclusion:

A number of years ago I was describing this project to a housing rights activist scholar. Perhaps with too much of a tinge of the cynicism that is allowed to fester amongst halls of the ivory tower, I complained at length about the limited visions of food activists, their propensity for romantic notions of community and effecting social change through consumption, and my general sense that their efforts might be better spent on “more important” issues like jobs and housing. Expecting my comrade to join in on my armchair philosophizing, I was surprised and admittedly embarrassed, when she replied that she felt that gardens and food projects are a really important and good thing for community activists. I am paraphrasing after-the-fact, but in short, she replied “We’re tired. We’re tired from fighting to save one family’s home; only to see dozens more foreclosed on at the same time. We’re tired from fighting to get jobs programs in disinvested areas; only to have the funding pulled a year later. We’re tired from trying to stop every horrible, neoliberal policy constantly coming down the pike. Gardens, good food, a sense that we can slow down and make our own spaces, these are things that allow us to rest, recuperate and have some hope for the long haul.” It was a moment that fundamentally changed how I approached this study; challenging me to take food activists at their word of their intentions, while still maintaining a healthy concern that not everyone’s intentions are so noble as those laid out by my visitor.

I end this project with much more ambivalence about what I have called the Urban Food Renaissance than I began with. When I started the research for this project, I expected to be able to clearly identify actors, practices and dimensions within the renaissance that were reshaping Los Angeles in radical (anti-capitalist, anti-racist, pro-environment, etc.) ways and those that were merely reproducing conservative and neoliberal ideology through food and digital technology. My goal had been to produce a document in support of the former while laying bare the contradictions of the latter. As I hope is clear from the previous five chapters, those lines were much harder to draw than I could have imagined; the motivations and outcomes of food projects blur very quickly. Urban food activists, gardeners, city officials, academics, and a whole host of other characters engaged with food practices in Los Angeles all occupy multiple spaces and identities at the same time, no one person or group “stands in” for any one explicit set of ideologies. There are clearly some places where I have tried to identify particularly promising or limiting trends within the movement, but the outcomes remain necessarily contingent. As much as food activists and scholars like to frame food politics as the key to unlocking social justice, as I have argued throughout, they remain inseparably enmeshed in their urban contexts. A new city council, global financial turbulence, or a prolonged drought are all well beyond the reach of food activists – even as they respond to such forces—and structure their possibilities far more than collective preferences for alternative food systems.

I remain—and have tried to demonstrate why—deeply skeptical that urban food movements as they stand in cities like Los Angeles will have significant impact on the structures of the global food system, let alone be the vanguard of a “Food Justice” movement. Though even here my conviction waivers, the broad vision and support of the Los Angeles Food Policy Council offers that faint glimmer that significant change is on the horizon. At the same time, I remain optimistic that the food renaissance might yet change and improve the everyday experience of urban life. I was genuinely surprised to find the cross class, race and ethnic communities that had developed around food practices in the city. They are not utopian by any stretch, but I am hard pressed to think of any other movements in recent history that have drawn in such a wide swath of the city around a common interest. Perhaps most exciting to me are the ways they engage the bizarre, sedimented layers of Los Angeles’s geography, reworking privatized suburban spaces as semi-public places, always taking advantage of LA’s endless ability to be reimagined as something better.

In the years I have been working on this project, a much more robust conversation has developed amongst practitioners, activists, policy maker and academics on the possibilities of alternative urban food systems. For those of us who do work in these areas, we are a bit like fish in water, and cannot always remember that the sea of urban gardening projects, food policy councils, CSAs, and information about “good food” was not always there. We can take it for granted that a food activist can be plucked up from Los Angeles and dropped into Oakland, Detroit, New Orleans, Chicago, Portland, New York or really any American City and immediately find “their people.” So while I have emphasized the importance of the historical-geographic context of Los Angeles—and continue to insist that this method is critical to understanding any conjuncture of modern urban food activism—it has become increasingly clear that the urban food renaissance is not determined *by* a place so much as it develops in response to it. As I wrote in the introduction, part of what food offers us is a lens on to a wide variety of social problems, but focusing that lens on different places will reveal very different things about them.

The question that remains the most unsettled to me, but perhaps most intriguing going forward, is that of the relationship between digital media and food movements. The widespread adoption of digital technologies across cities is a necessary but not sufficient condition for some of the stranger dimensions of the food renaissance as it is manifesting at this moment. In particular the political imaginations of what is possible vis-à-vis the web and food practices feels significantly altered (even in my lifetime) than previous attempts to remake urban spaces through food and agriculture. As with the above though, it still feels too soon to tell whether foodies are fooling themselves into feeling more powerful to effect change via their networks at a time when political and economic power are actually concentrating elsewhere, or if they are in fact constituting some new highly adaptable, “rhizomatic” social collectivity with unpredicted abilities to engage at multiple scales across a multiplicity of spaces.

Some of my hedging in this conclusion comes from that inevitable fact of contemporary projects that the world keeps changing as one tries to write about

how it just was. Since I began the research for this project in 2006, and especially since I complete the bulk of my fieldwork in 2012, the whole of Los Angeles has gone through a renaissance, not just the food system. In some extremely exciting and vibrant ways and in some extremely upsetting and unsettling ways the city is going through yet another round of economic, cultural and thus geographic changes. The landscape is being remade as new buildings go up, new people move (back) into the center and displace communities that had been there for a generation or more, new transit lines are opening or are about to open. There is a palpable sense of cohesive identity in the city, or perhaps of the city, than there has been in recent history. And on the national stage, Los Angeles seems to be increasingly escaping its reputation as a cultural backwater—in part thanks to its influence on food culture.

Even in terms of the people and organizations I discuss in this work there have been major developments. The Los Angeles City Council agreed to stop enforcing the parkway ordinance that Ron Finley had railed against in his TEDx talk—in a large part because Green Grounds had worked closely with the Los Angeles Food Policy Council to research the technical details of changing the ordinance and advocated on behalf of urban gardeners across the city to free up that small piece of land for growing. Again, it's a small victory and marks yet another roll back of local state oversight of land use, but also illustrates the power of the strange coalitions that form in Los Angeles around food. Along those lines, the Los Angeles Food Policy council survived a major mayoral election and has expanded its staff and the roles of the working groups. And despite my hesitations that urban agriculture becomes a panacea for all urban woes, a social justice organization that works with houseless communities on skid row has built a community garden as a centerpiece of staking a right to not be displaced from the place they've made communities for the last several decades (which also provides otherwise impossible to find fresh vegetables and fruit to the city's most disempowered). So the story in Los Angeles is far from over.

Outside of the city, the story just gets stranger by the week. Recently a suburban real estate development company announced they were building new planned communities that featured a fully functional small farm at the center. They promise the freshest and most local food possible without having to grow it yourself. Clearly the promise of the Garden City is alive, but far from well. On the technological front, the Economist just reported that huge advances have been made growing leafy crops indoors under the latest advanced LED lights. Hermetically sealed inside of (urban) buildings, these new farms are free of all the geographic nuisances of climate, water, soil, temperature – all can be controlled via computerized monitors surrounding the plants. We are that many steps closer to WALL•E world, both the one where unchecked consumption has destroyed the planet and the one where robots effectively control our food supply. In the midst of these developments, urbanites continue to dig up their yards, find those interstitial spaces for growing, find new products to make themselves, attend farmers markets and live out the urban food renaissance in Los Angeles.

Works Cited

- "About: Slow Food Los Angeles." 2015. *Slow Food Los Angeles*.
<http://slowfoodla.com/about/>.
- "About TED." 2013. *TED*. Accessed September 3. <http://www.ted.com/pages/about>.
- Abu-Lughod, Janet L. 2000. *New York, Chicago, Los Angeles: America's Global Cities*. 1st ed. Univ Of Minnesota Press.
- Alexander, Michelle. 2010. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York : [Jackson, Tenn.]: New Press ; Distributed by Perseus Distribution.
- Alkon, Alison, and Julian Agyerman. 2011. *Cultivating Food Justice: Race, Class, and Sustainability*. Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press.
- Alkon, Alison Hope. 2012. *Black, White, and Green: Farmers Markets, Race, and the Green Economy*. University of Georgia Press.
- Allen, Patricia. 2008. "Mining for Justice in the Food System: Perceptions, Practices, and Possibilities." *Agriculture and Human Values* 25 (2): 157–61.
- . 2010. "Realizing Justice in Local Food Systems." *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society* 3 (2): 295–308. doi:10.1093/cjres/rsq015.
- Allmer, Thomas. 2015. *Critical Theory and Social Media: Between Emancipation and Commodification*. Routledge.
- Almaguer, Tomás. 2008. *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California*. 2nd ed. University of California Press.
- Andrews, Geoff. 2008. *The Slow Food Story: Politics and Pleasure*. Montreal ; Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Aurigi, Alessandro. 2005. "Competing Urban Visions and the Shaping of the Digital City." *Knowledge, Technology & Policy* 18 (1): 12–26. doi:10.1007/s12130-005-1013-z.
- Avila, Eric. 2006. *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles*. University of California Press.
- Axelrod, Jeremiah B. C. 2009. *Inventing Autopia: Dreams and Visions of the Modern Metropolis in Jazz Age Los Angeles*. 1st ed. University of California Press.
- Bardhan, Ashok, and Richard Walker. 2011. "California Shrugged: Fountainhead of the Great Recession." *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society* 4 (3): 303–22. doi:10.1093/cjres/rsr005.
- Barraclough, Laura R. 2009. "South Central Farmers and Shadow Hills Homeowners: Land Use Policy and Relational Racialization in Los Angeles*." *The Professional Geographer* 61 (2): 164–86. doi:10.1080/00330120902735767.
- . 2011. *Making the San Fernando Valley: Rural Landscapes, Urban Development, and White Privilege*. University of Georgia Press.
- Benkler, Yochai. 2006. *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom*. New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press.
- Blay-Palmer, Dr Alison. 2012. *Food Fears: From Industrial to Sustainable Food Systems*. Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.

- Boal, Iain A., Janferie Stone, Michael Watts, and Calvin Winslow, eds. 2012. *West of Eden: Communes and Utopia in Northern California*. Oakland, CA: PM Press.
- Bobrow-Strain, Aaron. 2012. *White Bread: A Social History of the Store-Bought Loaf*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Bonacich, Edna, and Jake Alimahomed-Wilson. 2011. "Confronting Racism, Capitalism, and Ecological Degradation: Urban Farming and the Struggle for Social Justice in Black Los Angeles." *Souls* 13 (2): 213–26. doi:10.1080/10999949.2011.574574.
- Bourdieu, P., and R. Nice. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Harvard Univ Pr.
- Breivogel, Milton. 1948. *From Ciudad to Metropolis*. Los Angeles: The Research Committee Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce. Box 065. LAACC at USC.
- Britz, Richard. 1981. *The Edible City Resource Manual*. Los Altos, CA: William Kaufmann, Inc.
- Brown, Luther. 1917. "From Luther Brown to Hon. F.T. Woodman, Mayor, Aug 1917," August 1. 633. Los Angeles City Archives.
- Buttel, Frederick H., Fred Magdoff, and John Bellamy Foster. 2000. *Hungry for Profit: The Agribusiness Threat to Farmers, Food, and the Environment*. NYU Press.
- Carey, James. 1989. *Communication as Culture : Essays on Media and Society*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.
- Carpenter, Novella. 2010. *Farm City: The Education of an Urban Farmer*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Carriker, Robert. 2010. *Urban Farming in the West: A New Deal Experiment in Subsistence Homesteads*. Tuscon, AZ: The University of Arizon Press.
- Castells, Manuel. 1996. *The Rise of the Network Society*. Malden Mass.: Blackwell Publishers.
- Chase, John, Margaret Crawford, and John Kaliski. 1999. *Everyday Urbanism*. Monacelli Press.
- Cheng, Wendy. 2013. *The Changs Next Door to the Díazes: Remapping Race in Suburban California*. Minneapolis: Univ Of Minnesota Press.
- City of Los Angeles Council Records 112*. 1918. City Of Los Angeles.
- Colorado-Boulder, Margaret D. LeCompte, University of, Jean J. Schensul, Institute for Community Research, Merrill Singer, Robert T. Trotter II, and Ellen K. Cromley. 1999. *Mapping Social Networks, Spatial Data, and Hidden Populations*. Rowman Altamira.
- Crampton, Jeremy W., Mark Graham, Ate Poorthuis, Taylor Shelton, Monica Stephens, Matthew W. Wilson, and Matthew Zook. 2013. "Beyond the Geotag: Situating 'big Data' and Leveraging the Potential of the Geoweb." *Cartography and Geographic Information Science* 40 (2): 130–39. doi:10.1080/15230406.2013.777137.
- Crehan, Kate. 2011. "Gramsci's Concept of Common Sense: A Useful Concept for Anthropologists?" *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 16 (2): 273–87. doi:10.1080/1354571X.2011.542987.
- Culver, Lawrence. 2010. *The Frontier of Leisure: Southern California and the Shaping of Modern America*. Oxford University Press.

- Davis, Mike. 1998. "How Eden Lost Its Garden." In *The City: Los Angeles and Urban Theory at the End of the Twentieth Century*, edited by Allen J. Scott and Edward W. Soja. University of California Press.
- . 2001. "Sunshine and the Open Shop: Ford and Darwin in 1920s Los Angeles." In *Metropolis in the Making : Los Angeles in the 1920s*, edited by William Deverell and Tom Sitton. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Dear, M. 2003. "The Los Angeles School of Urbanism: An Intellectual History." *Urban Geography* 24 (6): 493–509.
- Denning, Michael. 2010. "Wageless Life." *New Left Review* 66 (November-December): 79–97.
- Deverell, William. 2004. *Whitewashed Adobe: The Rise of Los Angeles and the Remaking of Its Mexican Past*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Donald, Betsy, and Alison Blay-Palmer. 2006. "The Urban Creative-Food Economy: Producing Food for the Urban Elite or Social Inclusion Opportunity?" *Environment and Planning A* 38 (10): 1901.
- Dyer-Witheford, Nick. 1999. *Cyber-Marx*. University of Illinois Press.
- Ernest, F.H. 1935. *Facts About the Small Farm Home in Los Angeles*. Los Angeles: University of California Agricultural Extension Service.
- Ethington, Phillip. 2000. "Los Angeles and the Problem of Urban Historical Knowledge." *American Historical Review* 105 (5): 1667–1667.
- Fischer, Claude S. 1994. *America Calling*. University of California Press.
- Fishman, R. 1989. *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia*. Basic Books.
- Flamming, Douglas. 2005. *Bound for Freedom : Black Los Angeles in Jim Crow America*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Fogelson, Robert. 1967. *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- . 2005. *Bourgeois Nightmares: Suburbia, 1870-1930*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Ford, John Anson. 1961. *Thirty Explosive Years in Los Angeles County*. San Marino, Calif: Huntington Library.
- Foster, John Bellamy. 2000. *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature*. New York, NY: Monthly Review Press.
- Fox, Clare. 2010. "Food Policy Councils : Innovations in Democratic Governance for A Sustainable and Equitable Food System." Masters Thesis, Los Angeles: University of California, Los Angeles.
http://goodfoodla.org/uploaded_content/Resources-%20Student%20Research/clare%20fox_fpc_final.pdf.
- Fox, William J. 1940. *Land Use Survey: County of Los Angeles | Classification of Land Uses*. Classification of Land Uses. Los Angeles California: The Regional Planning Commission. Box 066. LA.
- Frauenfelder, Mark. 2010. *Made by Hand: Searching for Meaning in a Throwaway World*. New York, NY: Portfolio.
- Freund, David M. P. 2010. *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America*. University of Chicago Press.
- Garcia, M. 2001. *A World of Its Own: Race, Labor, and Citrus in the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970*. The University of North Carolina Press.

- Gast, Ross H. 1934. "The Subsistence Homesteads Program." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 175 (September): 240–43. doi:10.2307/1020721.
- Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. 2007. *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*. University of California Press.
- Glover, Paul. 1982. *Los Angeles: A History of the Future*. 1st ed. Los Angeles: Self Published.
- Goodman, David, and Michael Watts. 1997. *Globalising Food: Agrarian Questions and Global Restructuring*. Psychology Press.
- Gottlieb, Robert. 2007. *Reinventing Los Angeles: Nature and Community in the Global City*. The MIT Press.
- Gottlieb, Robert, and Anupama Joshi. 2010. *Food Justice*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Grampp, Christopher. 2008. *From Yard to Garden: The Domestication of America's Home Grounds*. Center for American Places.
- Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. New York, NY: International Publishers Co.
- . 2005. *The Southern Question*. Translated by Pasquale Verdicchio. Toronto: Guernica Editions.
- Groth, Paul, and Chris Wilson. 2003. *Everyday America*. University of California Press.
- Gruzd, Anatoliy, Barry Wellman, and Yuri Takhteyev. 2011. "Imagining Twitter as an Imagined Community." *American Behavioral Scientist* 55 (10): 1294–1318. doi:10.1177/0002764211409378.
- Gumpert, David E. 2013. *Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Food Rights: The Escalating Battle over Who Decides What We Eat*. White River Junction, Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing.
- Guthman, Julie. 2008a. "Bringing Good Food to Others: Investigating the Subjects of Alternative Food Practice." *Cultural Geographies* 15 (4): 431.
- . 2008b. "Neoliberalism and the Making of Food Politics in California." *Geoforum* 39 (3): 1171–83. doi:10.1016/j.geoforum.2006.09.002.
- . 2011. *Weighing in: Obesity, Food Justice, and the Limits of Capitalism*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Haeg, Fritz, Will Allen, and Diana Balmori. 2010. *Edible Estates: Attack on the Front Lawn, 2nd Revised Edition*. 2nd ed. Metropolis Books.
- Hall, Stuart, Doreen Massey, and Michael Rustin, eds. 2013. *After Neoliberalism? The Kilburn Manifesto*. Vol. 1. London, UK. <http://lwbooks.co.uk/journals/soundings/manifesto.html>.
- Hall, Stuart, David Morley, and Kuan-Hsing Chen. 1996. *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*. New York N.Y.: Routledge.
- Hall, Stuart, and O'Shea. 2013. "Common-Sense Neoliberalism." In *After Neoliberalism: The Kilburn Manifesto*, edited by Stuart Hall, Doreen Massey, and Michael Rustin. Vol. 1. London, UK. <http://lwbooks.co.uk/journals/soundings/manifesto.html>.

- Harris, Edmund. 2009. "Neoliberal Subjectivities or a Politics of the Possible? Reading for Difference in Alternative Food Networks." *Area* 41 (1): 55–63. doi:10.1111/j.1475-4762.2008.00848.x.
- Hart, G. 2001. "Progress Reports Development Critiques in the 1990s: Culs de Sac and Promising Paths." *Progress in Human Geography* 25 (4): 649–58.
- Harvey, David. 1982. *The Limits to Capital*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- . 2000. *Spaces of Hope*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- . 2012. *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*. Verso Books.
- Hauter, Wenonah. 2012. *Foodopoly: The Battle over the Future of Food and Farming in America*. New York : [Jackson, TN]: New Press ; Distributed by Perseus Distribution.
- Hayden, Dolores. 1995. *The Power of Place : Urban Landscapes as Public History*. Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press.
- . 2003. *Building Suburbia*. Pantheon Books.
- Hayes-Conroy, Jessica. 2008. "Hope for Community? Anarchism, Exclusion, and the Non-Human Realm." *Political Geography* 27 (1): 29–34.
- . 2010. "School Gardens and 'Actually Existing' Neoliberalism." *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations* 33 (1): 64–96.
- Heynen, N. 2009. "Back to Revolutionary Theory Through Racialized Poverty: The McGee Family's Utopian Struggle for Milwaukee." *Professional Geographer* 61 (2): 187–99.
- Hise, Greg. 1997. *Magnetic Los Angeles: Planning the Twentieth-Century Metropolis*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- . 2001. "Industry and Imaginative Geographies." In *Metropolis in the Making : Los Angeles in the 1920s*, edited by Tom Sitton and William Deverell. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Irazábal, Clara, and Anita Punja. 2009. "Cultivating Just Planning and Legal Institutions: A Critical Assessment of the South Central Farm Struggle in Los Angeles." *Journal of Urban Affairs* 31 (1): 1–23. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9906.2008.00426.x.
- Jackson, J. B. 1980. *The Necessity for Ruins: And Other Topics*. Univ of Massachusetts Press.
- Jackson, Kenneth T. 1985. *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kerr, Clark. 1933. "Self-Help: A Study of the Cooperative Barter Movement of the Unemployed in California, 1932-1933 ..." Palo Alto, CA: Stanford Junior University. Ban.
- Kitchin, Rob. 2013. "The Real-Time City? Big Data and Smart Urbanism." *GeoJournal* 79 (1): 1–14. doi:10.1007/s10708-013-9516-8.
- Klein, Norman. 1997. *The History of Forgetting: Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory*. New York, NY: Verso.
- Kolko, Beth, Lisa Nakamura, and Gilbert Rodman. 2013. *Race in Cyberspace*. Routledge.
- Kurashige, Scott. 2010. *The Shifting Grounds of Race: Black and Japanese Americans in the Making of Multiethnic Los Angeles*. Princeton University Press.

- Lappé, Frances Moore, Joseph Collins, and Cary Fowler. 1978. *Food First: Beyond the Myth of Scarcity*. Rev. ed. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Laslett, John. 2012. *Sunshine Was Never Enough: Los Angeles Workers, 1880-2010*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
<http://www.ucpress.edu/book.php?isbn=9780520273450>.
- Lave, Jean, Paul Duguid, Nadine Fernandez, and Erik Axel. 1992. "Coming of Age in Birmingham: Cultural Studies and Conceptions of Subjectivity." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 21 (January): 257–82. doi:10.2307/2155988.
- Lave, Jean, and Etienne Wenger. 1991. *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. New York, NY: Cambridge.
- Lawson, Laura. 2005. *City Bountiful: A Century of Community Gardening in America*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
<http://www.ucpress.edu/book.php?isbn=9780520243439>.
- Lefebvre, Henri. 1992. *The Production of Space*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- . 1996. "The Right to the City." In *Writings on Cities*, translated by Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas. Oxford, UK ; Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell.
- . 2008. *Critique of Everyday Life*. London: Verso.
- Lefebvre, Henri, Stuart Elden, and Neil Brenner. 2009. *State, Space, World*. U of Minnesota Press.
- Lipsitz, George. 2006. *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness*. Temple University Press.
- Longstreth, Richard W. 1998. *City Center to Regional Mall: Architecture, the Automobile, and Retailing in Los Angeles, 1920-1950*. MIT Press.
- Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce. 1934. *What the Newcomer Should Know About the Small Farm Home in Los Angeles County*. Rev. [Los Angeles: The Chamber].
- Los Angeles County Chamber of Commerce. 1940. *What the Newcomer Should Know About Agriculture in Los Angeles County and Southern California*. Los Angeles, CA: Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors.
- Los Angeles County Farm and Home Advisors. 1954. *Agricultural Progress : A Report of the Los Angeles County, Farm and Home Advisors*. Los Angeles County Farm and Home Advisors. Science & Tech. Dept: CLOSED STACKS. Los Angeles Public Library.
- Loyd, Jenna M., Matt Mitchelson, and Andrew Burrige, eds. 2012. *Beyond Walls and Cages: Prisons, Borders, and Global Crisis*. Geographies of Justice and Social Transformation 14. Athens: University of Georgia Press.
- Martin, Laura Renata. 2013. "'California's Unemployed Feed Themselves': Conservative Intervention in the Los Angeles Cooperative Movement, 1931–1934." *Pacific Historical Review* 82 (1): 33–62. doi:10.1525/phr.2013.82.1.33.
- Martucci, Amelia. 1959. *Small Farms: Social Studies Instructional Guide Grade A2*. Vol. 1. Social Studies Instructional Guide, Publication No. EC-206. Los Angeles, CA: Los Angeles Unified School District: Division of Instructional Services.
- Marx, Karl. 1967. *Capital: A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production*. Edited by Frederick Engels. 3 vols. New York, NY: International Publishers Co.
- Marx, Leo. 1964. *The Machine in the Garden Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- McChesney, Robert Waterman. 2007. *Communication Revolution*. New Press.

- McChesney, Robert Waterman, Ellen Meiksins Wood, and John Bellamy Foster. 1998. *Capitalism and the Information Age*. Monthly Review Press.
- McClintock, Nathan. 2010. "Why Farm the City? Theorizing Urban Agriculture through a Lens of Metabolic Rift." *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society* 3 (2): 191–207. doi:10.1093/cjres/rsq005.
- . 2013. "Radical, Reformist, and Garden-Variety Neoliberal: Coming to Terms with Urban Agriculture's Contradictions." *Local Environment* 0 (0): 1–25. doi:10.1080/13549839.2012.752797.
- McGirr, Lisa. 2001. *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right*. Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- McKay, George. 2011. *Radical Gardening: Politics, Idealism & Rebellion in the Garden*. London, UK: Francis-Lincoln.
http://www.academia.edu/215987/Radical_Gardening_Politics_Idealism_and_Rebellion_in_the_Garden.
- McLuhan, Marshall, Quentin Fiore, and Jerome Agel. 2001. *The Medium Is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects*. Corte Madera, CA: Gingko Press.
- McLuhan, Marshall, and Bruce R. Powers. 1989. *The Global Village: Transformations in World Life and Media in the 21st Century*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- McMichael, Philip. 2013. *Food Regimes and Agrarian Questions*. Agrarian Change & Peasant Studies 2. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.
- McWilliams, Carey. 1973. *Southern California: An Island on the Land*. Santa Barbara, CA: Peregrine Smith.
- Milkman, Ruth. 2006. *L. A. Story: Immigrant Workers and the Future of the U.S. Labor Movement*. New York N.Y.: R. Sage Foundation.
- Milkman, Ruth, Joshua Bloom, and Victor Narro. 2013. *Working for Justice: The L.A. Model of Organizing and Advocacy*. Cornell University Press.
- Miller, Sally. 2008. *Edible Action: Food Activism and Alternative Economics*. Halifax, N.S: Fernwood Pub.
- Miller, Timothy. 2012. "California Communes: A Venerable Tradition." In *West of Eden: Communes and Utopia in Northern California*, by Ian Boal, Janferie Stone, Michael Watts, and Cal Winslow. Oakland, CA: PM Press.
- Mitchell, Don. 2003. *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space*. 1st ed. The Guilford Press.
- Mitchell, Katharyne. 2010. "Pre-Black Futures." *Antipode* 41: 239–61. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8330.2009.00724.x.
- Mitchell, William J. 2000. *E-Topia*. The MIT Press.
- Mohan, Giles, and Kristian Stokke. 2000. "Participatory Development and Empowerment: The Dangers of Localism." *Third World Quarterly* 21 (2): 247–68. doi:10.1080/01436590050004346.
- Morgan, Kevin. 2014. "Nourishing the City: The Rise of the Urban Food Question in the Global North." *Urban Studies*, May, 0042098014534902. doi:10.1177/0042098014534902.
- Nakamura, Lisa. 2002. *Cybertypes: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity on the Internet*. Routledge.

- Nestle, Marion. 2013. *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health*. Revised and expanded 10th anniversary ed. California Studies in Food and Culture 3. Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press.
- Nicolaides, Becky. 2001. "The Quest for Independence: Workers in the Suburbs." In *Metropolis in the Making : Los Angeles in the 1920s*, edited by Tom Sitton and William Deverell. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 2002. *My Blue Heaven : Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920-1965*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ollman, Bertell. 1976. *Alienation: Marx's Conception of Man in Capitalist Society*. 2d ed. Cambridge Studies in the History and Theory of Politics. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- "Ordinance 36487." 1917. City of Los Angeles.
- Pastor, Manuel, Chris Benner, and Martha Matsuoka. 2009. *This Could Be the Start of Something Big: How Social Movements for Regional Equity Are Reshaping Metropolitan America*. 1st ed. Cornell, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Patel, Raj. 2012. *Stuffed and Starved: The Hidden Battle for the World Food System*. 2nd ed. Brooklyn, N.Y: Melville House Pub.
- Peck, Jamie. 2010. *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pollan, Michael. 2007. *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. LRG. Large Print Pr.
- Poster, Mark. 2006. *Information Please: Culture and Politics in the Age of Digital Machines*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Pred, Allan. 2005. "Scientists Without Borders Or Moments of Insight, Spaces of Recognition: Situated Practice, Science and the Navigation of Everyday Urban Life." In *B/ORDERING SPACE*, edited by Henk Van Houtum, Oliver Kramsch, and Wolfgang Zierhofer, 249. Border Regions. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
- Pudup, Mary Beth. 2008. "It Takes a Garden: Cultivating Citizen-Subjects in Organized Garden Projects." *Geoforum* 39 (3): 1228–40. doi:10.1016/j.geoforum.2007.06.012.
- Pulido, Laura, Laura Barraclough, and Wendy Cheng. 2012. *A People's Guide to Los Angeles*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Quam-Wickham, Nancy. 2001. "'Another World': Work, Home and Autonomy in Blue Collar Suburbs." In *Metropolis in the Making : Los Angeles in the 1920s*, edited by Tom Sitton and William Deverell. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- "Richland Farms | Departures | KCET." 2013. *KCET*. Accessed September 3. <http://www.kcet.org/socal/departures/richland-farms/>.
- Ritzer, George. 2011. *The McDonaldization of Society* 6. 6th ed. Los Angeles: SAGE/Pine Forge.
- Roberts, Evan. 2013. "Review of Carriker, Robert, 'Urban Farming in the West: A New Deal Experiment in Subsistence Homesteads.'" *H-Urban, H-Net Reviews*, January. <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=36271>.
- Robinson, W. W. 1942. "The Southern California Real Estate Boom of the Twenties." *The Quarterly: Historical Society of Southern California* 24 (1): 25–30. doi:10.2307/41167994.

- Roediger, David R. 1999. *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*. Verso.
- Rolfe, Frank. 1915. *Commercial Geography of Southern California*. Biola Press. <http://archive.org/details/17175207>.
- Sabin, Paul. 2005. *Crude Politics: The California Oil Market, 1900-1940*. Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press.
- Sackman, Dougl. 2006. "Garden of Wordly Delights." In *Land of Sunshine: An Environmental History of Metropolitan Los Angeles*, edited by William Deverell. University of Pittsburgh Pre.
- Sato, Dale Ann. 2009. *Japanese Americans of the South Bay*. Images of America. Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing.
- Savio, Yvonne. 2011. Yvonne Savio on LA Master GardenersPhone.
- Sayre, Laura. 2011. "The Politics of Organic Farming: Populists, Evangelicals, and the Agriculture of the Middle." *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture* 11 (2): 38–47.
- Schlosser, Eric. 2001. *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Scott, A. J., and E. W. Soja. 1998. *The City: Los Angeles and Urban Theory at the End of the Twentieth Century*. University of California Press.
- Scott, Allen J. 2006. "Creative Cities: Conceptual Issues and Policy Questions." *Journal of Urban Affairs* 28 (1): 1–17. doi:10.1111/j.0735-2166.2006.00256.x.
- Scott Hamilton Kennedy. 2009. *The Garden*. Documentary. Black Valley Films.
- Scott, Mel. 1942. *Cities Are for People; the Los Angeles Region Plans for Living*. Los Angeles, Calif: Lithographed by the Homer Boelter Company.
- Shelton, Taylor, Matthew Zook, and Alan Wiig. 2014. "The 'actually Existing Smart City.'" *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, October, rsu026. doi:10.1093/cjres/rsu026.
- Shiva, Vandana. 2000. *Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.
- Sides, Josh. 2006. *L.A. City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present*. University of California Press.
- . , ed. 2012. *Post-Ghetto: Reimagining South Los Angeles*. Huntington Library and University of California Press.
- Sitton, Tom, and William Deverell. 2001. *Metropolis in the Making : Los Angeles in the 1920s*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Soja, Edward W. 1989. *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*. London: Verso.
- . 1996. *Thirdspace*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Spangler, Stacy. 2011. "About." Blogger. *Stacy Six*. August 25. <http://stacysix.blogspot.com/>.
- Stanton, Andrew. 2008. *WALL•E*. Animation. Pixar.
- Tasch, Woody. 2010. *Inquiries into the Nature of Slow Money: Investing as If Food, Farms, and Fertility Mattered*. Chelsea Green Publishing.
- Taylor, Paul, and Clark Kerr. 1934. "Whither Self-Help?" *Survey Graphic: Magazine of Social Interpretation* XXIII (7): 328–31, 348.

- Terranova, Tiziana. 2004. *Network Culture*. Pluto Press.
- Townsend, Anthony M. 2013. *Smart Cities: Big Data, Civic Hackers, and the Quest for a New Utopia*. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Turner, F. 2009. "Burning Man at Google: A Cultural Infrastructure for New Media Production." *New Media & Society* 11 (1-2): 73.
- Turner, Fred. 2006. "From Counterculture to Cyberculture." presented at the MediaBerkman Lunch, Berkman Center for Internet and Society, December 1. <http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/node/3287>.
- unsigned. 1932. "Starvation In the Midst of Plenty." Banc MSS C-A 273 Box 1 : Folder 3. Bancsoft.
- Urban Farming Advocates. 2010. "A Word from LA City Council President Garcetti...." May 24. http://urbanfarmingadvocates.org/posted_by_ufa/a-word-from-la-city-council-president-garcetti/.
- Varnelis, Kazys. 2009. *The Infrastructural City: Networked Ecologies in Los Angeles*. Actar.
- Viehe, Fred. 1981. "Black Gold Suburbs: The Influence of the Extractive Industry on the Suburbanization of Los Angeles, 1890-1930." *Journal of Urban History* 8 (1): 3.
- Waldie, D. 1996. *Holy Land: A Suburban Memoir*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Walker, Richard. 2004. *The Conquest of Bread: 150 Years of Agribusiness in California*. New Press.
- . 2009. *The Country in the City: The Greening of the San Francisco Bay Area*. University of Washington Press.
- Walker, Richard, and Robert Lewis. 2004. "Beyond the Crabgrass Frontier: Industry and the Spread of American Cities, 1850-1950." In *Manufacturing Suburbs: Building Work and Home on the Metropolitan Fringe*, edited by Robert Lewis. Philadelphia PA: Temple University.
- Watts, Michael, and David Goodman. 1997. "Agrarian Questions: Global Appetite, Local Metabolism: Nature, Culture, And Industry in Fin-de-Siècle Agro-Food Systems." In *Globalising Food: Agrarian Questions and Global Restructuring*, edited by David Goodman and Michael Watts. London ; New York: Routledge.
- Weber, Karl, ed. 2009. *Food, Inc.: How Industrial Food Is Making Us Sicker, Fatter and Poorer -- and What You Can Do about It*. 1st ed. New York: PublicAffairs.
- Weinstein, Richard. 1996. "The First American City." In *The City: Los Angeles and Urban Theory at the End of the Twentieth Century*, by Allen J. Scott and Edward W. Soja. Ber: University of California Press.
- Weissman, Evan, Jonnell Robinson, Matthew Potteiger, Susan Adair, and Sean Keefe. 2013. "Feeding the City: Political Economic Constraints on Efforts to Improve Fresh Produce Access in Syracuse, New York." presented at the Association of American Geographers, Los Angeles, CA, April 29. <http://meridian.aag.org/callforpapers/program/AbstractDetail.cfm?AbstractID=49680>.
- Weiss, Mark. 1987. *The Rise of the Community Builders: The American Real Estate Industry and Urban Land Planning*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- "What Is Good Food?" 2013. *Los Angeles Food Policy Council*. Accessed September 3. <http://goodfoodla.org/good-food/what-is-good-food/>.

- White, Milton R., and Calvin Bream. 1958. *Crop Acreage Trends for Los Angeles County and Southern California, 1925-1957*. Los Angeles, CA: Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors.
- White, Monica M. 2011. "Sisters of the Soil: Urban Gardening as Resistance in Detroit." *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts* 5 (1): 13–28. doi:10.2979/racethmulglocon.5.1.13.
- Williams, Raymond. 1973. *The Country and the City*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- . 1977. *Marxism and Literature*. Marxist Introductions. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 1985. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Rev Sub. Oxford University Press, USA.
- . 1989. *Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy, Socialism*. Edited by Robin Gable. Verso.
- Willis, Paul. 1981. "Cultural Production Is Different from Cultural Reproduction Is Different from Social Reproduction Is Different from Reproduction." *Interchange* 12 (2-3): 48–67. doi:10.1007/BF01192107.
- Winne, Mark. 2010. *Food Rebels, Guerrilla Gardeners, and Smart-Cookin' Mamas: Fighting Back in an Age of Industrial Agriculture*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Wolch, Jennifer, John Wilson, and Jed Fehrenbach. 2005. "Parks and Park Funding in Los Angeles: An Equity-Mapping Analysis." *Urban Geography* 26 (1): 4–35. doi:10.2747/0272-3638.26.1.4.
- Xu, Chen, David W. Wong, and Chaowei Yang. 2013. "Evaluating the 'geographical Awareness' of Individuals: An Exploratory Analysis of Twitter Data." *Cartography and Geographic Information Science* 40 (2): 103–15. doi:10.1080/15230406.2013.776212.
- Yoshihara, Nancy. 2006. "Watching L.A. Grow." *Los Angeles Times*, April 30, sec. Real Estate. <http://articles.latimes.com/2006/apr/30/realestate/re-125yoshihara30>.
- Zappia, Natale. 2012. "Reclaiming The Soil: Gardening and Sustainable Development in South Los Angeles." In *Post-Ghetto: Reimagining South Los Angeles*, edited by Josh Sides. Huntington Library and University of California Press.