Stealing is Sharing is Caring: Mapping Pathways from Angst to Love [Design interventions to explore a community scale, localised food system]

A project submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the project is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Juliette Anich

5th August 2016
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Acknowledgements

Despite only one name appearing on the cover of this work, it has been no way a solo journey. At the very core of this practice are the relationships I have experienced and observed between people. I have been so blessed to be able to have met, conversed, debated, and challenged by so many people over the course of this work. It is this, I consider, the greatest outcome of this process.

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It takes a village.

Thankyou all so very much.
Abstract

Contemporary manifestations of urban agriculture have become symbols of creativity, activism and sustainability in cities. Originally designed to co-locate food and people, urban agriculture produces not just food, but draws people together for social interactions that may have not otherwise existed. What is interesting with these social interactions, is that shared interests don’t necessarily translate to sharing other things.

This practice explores the social context around urban agriculture through a series of design interventions that challenge ideas of ownership, the boundaries drawn between private and public, collaboration and cooperation, value and waste. Utilising action research methodology has enabled an unique insight as both a mirror and a window into the current food and sustainability practices, and urban culture in Australia.

The practice takes place over 3 locations in 2 states: Newcastle NSW, Melbourne and Castlemaine Victoria. All of these places are hubs of creativity and social innovation, offering space to foster and incubate this type of collaborative, sometimes disruptive work.

As part of this reflective process, a model is created that provides a framework in which this work and other similar projects can operate on.
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The law locks up the man or woman
Who steals the goose from off the common
But leaves the greater villain loose
Who steals the common from off the goose

The law demands that we atone
When we take things we do not own
But leaves the lords and ladies fine
Who take things that are yours and mine

The poor and wretched don’t escape
If they conspire the law to break
This must be so but they endure
Those who conspire to make the law

The law locks up the man or woman
Who steals the goose from off the common
And geese will still a common lack
Till they go and steal it back

(Seventeenth century protest against English enclosures, cited in Patel, 2009)
They were digging as they talked. The tunnel was going forward fast.

Suddenly Badger said, ‘Doesn’t this worry you just a tiny bit, Foxy?’

‘Worry me?’ said Mr Fox. ‘What?’

‘All this ... this stealing.’

‘Mr Fox stopped digging and stared at Badger as though he had gone completely dotty. ‘My dear old furry frump,’ he said, ‘do you know anyone in the whole world who wouldn’t swipe a few chickens if his children were starving to death?’

There was a short silence while Badger thought deeply about this.

‘You are far too respectable,’ said Mr Fox.

‘There’s nothing wrong with being respectable,’ Badger said.

(Dahl R, 2013, Fantastic Mr Fox, p. 58-59)
After a dreary conversation in our living room one night about his entailment, before Mr. Cunningham left he said, “Mr Finch, I don’t know when I’ll ever be able to pay you.”

“Let that be the least of your worries, Walter,” Atticus said.

When I asked Jem what entailment was, and Jem described it as a condition of having your tail in a crack, I asked Atticus if Mr. Cunningham would ever pay us.

“Not in money,” Attitus said, “but before the year’s out I’ll have been paid. You watch.”

We watched. One morning Jem and I found a load of stove wood in the backyard. Later, a sack of hickory nuts appeared on the back steps. With Christmas came a crate of smilax and holly. That spring when we found a crockersack full of turnip greens, Atticus said Mr. Cunningham had more than paid him.

“Why does he pay you like that?” I asked.

“Because that’s the only way he can pay me. He has no money.”

(Extract from Harper Lee’s To Kill A Mocking Bird, cited in Lapham’s Quarterly 2011)
Introduction
Introduction

This body of work is an exploration into enabling pro-environmental behaviour by individuals in ways that overcome negative perceptions, ‘green fatigue’, social stigmas, governmental and institutional inertia, and other commonplace barriers to pro-environmental action. It uses food production and distribution in urban environments as a vehicle for engagement.

This work is not characterised by unlawful behaviour or radical acts by delinquents; however, these issues emerge from time to time. Rather it encourages ground up, grass roots activity, to both ‘be the change we want to see’ and also push the boundaries of acceptable behaviour at a community level, at a time of environmental imperative. There is a focus on enabling self-organising communities, group collaboration and repositioning fringe activities so they are seen as socially normal.

Many of the activities engaged with for this exploration are not brand new ideas but are existing ideas and practices, reconsidered, redesigned and repositioned to be more socially appealing to a broader range of people.

Before commencing the projects collectively presented here, I was part of forming an organisation that held clothes swapping events as a viable alternative to consuming new fashion. The service design of The Clothing Exchange was developed through Kate Pears’ masters thesis that explored wasteful consumption in the fashion industry (Pears, 2006). During the five years I was involved in this organisation I completed my own masters thesis in ethical consumer decision making and behaviour. The experience of being involved simultaneously in a practicing service design, and in research, was invaluable as the words I was reading and writing could be observed, or not observed at times, in real life through the clothes swapping events. It was during this time that my particular interest in active participant design was solidified and I was able to nurture a growing interest in understanding individual and group pro-environmental behaviour.
Similar to the collection of projects profiled in this thesis, the idea behind The Clothing Exchange was not new, but an activity dusted off, the system of exchange refined, an experience created around it to be socially appealing, or ‘more interesting than separating your paper from your plastics’. The sustainability agenda behind The Clothing Exchange was always in the forefront of the organisation’s intent with each event opening with a short introduction by the host outlining the value of waste reactivation rather than consuming brand new. The marketing activities engaged in by The Clothing Exchange, which I was responsible for during my tenure, always used a strong environmental perspective including partnerships with the Sustainable Living Festival, features in Peppermint magazine (a magazine focusing on green and ethical fashion), and a long line of citations from social commentators exploring pro environmental behaviour, including Julian Lee’s How Good Are You (Lee, 2008), Rachel Botsman’s Collaborative Consumption (Botsman & Rogers, 2010) and Kate Fletcher’s continual commentary around sustainable fashion.

The Clothing Exchange was also heavily involved with the fashion industry in Melbourne, featuring events at the annual L’Oreal Melbourne Fashion Week, and began attracting interest from fashion retail companies that could capitalise on this newfound movement by using the events as a marketing tool to engage with pro environmental consumers. Treading a fine line between maintaining the core values of re-engaging fashion waste as a pro environmental behaviour, and being an appealing entity within the fashion industry that thrives on obsolesce and the continual pursuit of ‘new’, meant that from time to time compromise decisions needed to be consented to through the management of The Clothing Exchange.

‘Sustainable consumption’ is a term that seems to have the ability to cover a multitude of sins. It offers the ability for consumer sovereignty and free market choice without necessarily creating meaningful behaviour change that results in a better environmental outcome – after all the term implies that you, the consumer, can keep buying!

It was this tension between ideology and practice that I found both fascinating to watch and challenging to understanding. Ultimately it led me to step away from The Clothing Exchange to pursue different projects that engaged directly with this tension in order to unpack it further.
Food as a common theme for subsequent projects was both intentional and accidental. I had used the notion of organic food purchasing to measure ethical consumer behaviour in my masters thesis, simply because this was the most widespread ethical consumer behaviour available at that time (2009). So the continuing interest in food as a common interest, and as a means of bridging existing attitudes to bring about pro environmental behaviour, seemed an obvious route for me to continue to investigate. The first project in this body of work, The Foraging Commons, was inspired by the work of the artist collective, Fallen Fruit, based in Los Angles and profiled in Pollen’s *The Omnivore’s Dilemma* (2007). The success of Pollen’s book can, without a doubt, be linked to the rise in food as the next ‘fad’. Timing was on my side and I was able to ride this rise in public interest in food as a means for building my exploration into encouraging pro environmental behaviour. Now, six years since the commencement of my first project, food is still being used as a connector and a bridge to aid in people’s understanding of culture, social activities and the environment.

During the reflective process of this body of work, I have found that my practice is situated at the nexus between three knowledge areas: sustainability, activism and urban agriculture. It is through my developed understanding of these knowledge areas that my practice has evolved and this body of work has been informed.

**Sustainability**

This body of work explores notions of sustainability and how sustainability ideology sometimes creates tensions in practice. The modern sustainability movement is criticised for its many compromises that include the belief we can buy our way to a sustainable future (that is, sustainable consumption), and that technology will save us. There is a lack of connection and understanding between the limits of capacity and an aesthetic preference which is affordable to only a few that has the self-undermining potential to result in ‘green smug’.
Through my practice I explore how pro-environmental activities can be designed so that they are more interesting than separating your paper from your plastics, overcomes the ‘green fatigue’ associated with much of the sustainability movement, and provides a social and cultural meaning for people to be involved in.

**Activism**

From the outset, I didn’t anticipate creating a disruption. However, the essence of these projects is to change behaviour. Change is always met with resistance, and resistance sometimes comes with disruption. This body of work is a form of activism, but it’s not the kind of activism that sees angry protesters standing in picket lines. This practice embraces the idea of civil disobedience as a means for getting constructive things done by actually doing them. It challenges ideas around ownership, value and exchange, and waste. These are concepts that are at the very heart of the capitalist system in which we live. The practice does not do this by embracing anarchy, which can be sometimes associated with activism. Rather, it connects participants with social and cultural experiences that have meaning to them. This includes sharing excess produce with the community, harvesting backyard trees and coming together to build a garden.

By connecting with situations that already hold meaning to participants, an ethical framework is rediscovered in which to operate, both within and outside current government regulations.
Urban Agriculture

Urban agriculture is enjoying a wave of popularity in developed cities as town planners and designers are encouraged to reintroduce green productive spaces into concrete jungles. This practice uses food as a vehicle for its explorations, as in where it is grown, harvested, shared and enjoyed. It is located within the theoretical area of urban agriculture as it is the co-location of food and people that I am interested in.

Food, as a source of life has always been an area where people have had to share for resilience and enjoyed sharing as part of celebration. It is, therefore, an appropriate place to explore how this translates into an era where we have never had to want for anything, ownership rights are hotly contested, and the art of receiving (and receiving gracefully) is lost.

Approach

Peter Downton (2003) identifies three types of design research: research into design, research through design, and research for design. This practice adopts the research approach of research through design where the knowledge gained from designing and doing informs the research. The way that it materialises in my practice, however, is a form of rapid prototyping where my design informing the research happens quickly. The feedback generated from the design is then woven back into the design as a process to improve it; sometimes this happens at the moment the feedback is received, while at other times there will be time lag between feedback and integration. Real life systems testing offers invaluable feedback to the design process that could not be formulated in a lab or through models. Firsthand experience drives the way I design and how my designs are experienced. The participants and community that experience my practice are invited (knowingly or not) along for the journey with me to discover whether the design will work. This transparent design approach can lead to hostile situations when some people are disturbed by the design, while others appreciate the honesty of an open process.
This type of iterative prototyping is also referred to as ‘knowing in action’ which is a reflective practice method outlined by Donald Schon (1983). Schon presents ‘knowing in action’ as a way of producing tacit knowledge through the practice. It is a type of decision making made in the moment or on the fly during the moment the design is being experienced. Schon describes these fleeting moments as ‘the zone of time in which action can still make a difference to the situation’ (1983, p. 62). Identifying these moments is part of the design process for reflection–in–action practitioners, and it is part of the way these designers improve their practice. Through my practice I have endeavoured to be a reflection–in–action practitioner through knowing in action.

This type of practitioner is one who consciously seeks to identify and communicate these moments of reflection–in–action for the improvement of their own practice and to share their practice insights with others. To do this, Schön suggests four methods of reflective research:

1. Frame analysis – The researcher is able to frame the problem presented in a certain way which defines the values that shape their practice or a school of thought or movement in which they identify. This then consciously determines where the researcher will focus their attention.
2. Repertoire–building research – The researcher collects a history of precedents and examples in which they can draw upon to guide their practice and their decision–making.
3. Research on methods and theories – In order to explain the practice, the researcher uses theoretical methods and positions to develop an understanding of their practice.
4. The study of reflection–in–action – The researcher reflects on their own processes in order to become aware of the practice’s influence and understanding the effects of the practice.

All of these methods have been utilized in order to extract a clear understanding of what my practice does and how it is evolved.
**Method**
I have engaged with an iterative design process through this body of work that has resulted in me using a ‘mash up’ of tools collected from my design and marketing education, combined with my professional experiences. The methodology involves rapid real life prototyping, research through design, recording through observations and photography, collecting experiences and mapping.

**Rapid real life prototyping**
Each project progresses through idea and concept development phases quickly to become a working prototype within days. This isn’t a highly intensive process. Rather it capitalises on simple processes and human scale activity to become a ‘living thing’ quickly. This process allows me to experience the project, analyse shortcomings, change things on the spot and in real time, and captures the excitement of a new project without stretching out the development phase. In short, I just get out there and do it. Often elements of the project need improvements, but this feedback can be quickly worked back into the design in a highly iterative process I use.

**Research through design**
This body of work was largely created after the criticism received from the media coverage of The Foraging Commons. Without the criticism, this reflective practice arguably would not exist, nor would the broader collection of works. In Design Research (2003), Peter Downton suggests that design is a way of researching and producing knowledge.

Downton writes:

> For a designer to operate, to begin making design moves, complete knowledge is not necessary, although more knowledge is typically, but not always, likely to be useful. Minimally, an amount of each of the types sufficient to commence the design task is necessary; the need for more knowledge and the type and scope of what is required is typically understood during the process. Here design research leads to not only an increase in knowledge, but experiments and explorations that make the need for more knowledge clear (p. 63).
Design as a research method has been utilised by scholars and designers particularly when building knowledge around spaces and cities.

**Recordings through Observation and Photography**

Documentation of the projects as they happen is a crucial element to record the event: what happened, how it happened and what could have happened. Photography is used during the event to form part of the documentation. Still photography captures the moment and communicates effectively the practice itself. My noticing, observations and personal experiences are recorded in a series of A5 diaries I kept. In these diaries the whole process of evolution and developing the project would be recorded as well as plans, drawings, minutes of meetings and agendas. I would also contribute reflective pieces or narratives about what happened after an event had taken place. Downton (2003) explains how research through designing is supported when there are reflective processes focusing on designing conducted at the same time designing is being undertaken.

**Collecting Experiences**

The most interesting parts of the diaries I kept, I find now, is the collection of insights I gained from visitors, participants, onlookers and project partners and which I recorded. These informal interviews were conducted voluntarily, when I asked for opinions or their feedback, and involuntarily, when someone approached me to give me opinions and feedback. It was often the involuntary circumstances that I was most surprised by and offered the most insights into the projects. Guthrie and Anderson (2010) explain that ‘from a research perspective, the stories that people tell, their narratives about their destination experience, are a remarkably useful way of capturing what was significant for them’ (p. 111). This method of collecting experiences was not done to measure the level of an experience held by a participant or visitor, but rather to gain an understanding of some of processes involving them that I may have overlooked.
Mapping
I utilised a technique of mapping to understand, during the reflective process, how each of the projects I was involved in and helped design related to each other. Black (2009) writes, ‘mapping constructs is a way of seeing’, where ‘the notions of a site and to site are formulated and tested through drawn information – a process that leads to knowing how and where to intervene in a location’ (p. 27). Originally it seemed like a technique appropriate to use as the original project, The Foraging Commons, is actually based on a geographic map where the locations of food grown on or over public land is shared. However, as the body of work developed, I used the visual method of mapping to gain an understanding of my practice. It has also played an important role in development of how to communicate what my work has been all about to a broader audience that may not have encountered my projects.

Project Design
This body of work is made up of three projects: The Foraging Commons, Sharing Abundance, and Reclaim the Curb. The account of these projects, the experiences gained through them, and my reflections of the processes, involved are woven through the three chapters. Supporting this reflection process, drawings from literature are integrated into the narrative as this is an informed exploratory practice.

The Foraging Commons
The first project of this body of work was the catalyst for this specific exploration utilising urban agriculture within the design component. The Foraging Commons is an online mapping application that documents and shares the locations of where food is growing on or over public space. This project began in Newcastle NSW where I was based before returning
to live in Melbourne. This project was influential for me as practitioner as it gave me a unique perspective on communities of practice and the associated ideology that accompanies those individual communities. The media played a crucial role in this process which encouraged the further exploration into the tensions between ideology and practice.

**Reclaim the Curb**
Imagine if the streets were lined with fruit trees, empty spaces were filled with vegetable gardens and we were able to live amongst a growing abundance of food. This was the concept behind the project, Reclaim the Curb; an activist collective formed to take action around forgotten pieces of public space by enabling those people who use it to reclaim it by planting it out with productive edible plants. This project was developed in response to the finding from The Foraging Commons project that there is actually not that much food growing on public spaces. The project was also used as a campaign tool to question the role of community in decisions and actions that take place ‘on the ground’. The collective operates on a principle of asking for forgiveness rather than permission in order to enable community scale action, by avoiding council and organisational bureaucracy.

**Sharing Abundance**
Sharing Abundance is an exploratory local food harvesting and distribution system involving mutual exchange of fresh produce and labour in a fun, social way. By coordinating groups of volunteers to harvest excess backyard produce and maintain fruit trees, waste is reduced and pest and disease in fruit trees are managed. The produce harvested is shared between those involved and those in need, such as local schools and hospitals.

This project was inspired into action by similar programs developing throughout the UK and Canada. However, in these locations, every time a new community wanted to use this harvesting framework they were required to set it up from scratch. Through the Sharing Abundance project, I wanted to explore how I could amplify this type of activity through promotion and by creating a ‘how to’ guide built out of the experiences gained through actually running this program.
Structure

This exegesis comprises three chapters: Circumnavigating Sharing, Making Space, and Dialogue of Doing. This written document is the result of an informed exploratory practice that brings together the account of the projects profiled above, the experiences gained through the practice, the literature reviewed that defines and supports the knowledge areas this practice contributes to, and the reflections gained from combining all of these strands.

Chapter 1: Circumnavigating Sharing
Setting the scene for the practice and introducing the projects
Circumnavigating Sharing establishes the context for this body of work. It explores the sharing economy, consumerist lifestyles and the political landscape of Australian politics in 2009. The timeliness is hugely important to locate this body of work in, as it informs this practice and supports the relevance of this work.

The chapter then goes into profiling each of the three projects, providing detailed project accounts and the beginning narrative into the issues around each of the projects.

Chapter 2: Tracing Theory
Exploring the theoretical and practical landscape of this practice
Tracing Theory takes a step back from the detail associated within each of the projects and the specific happenings in the public conscious at that time. Rather, the chapter explores the knowledge areas these projects contribute to. This body of work is located at the nexus of three knowledge areas, which are sustainability, activism and urban agriculture design. This chapter reviews each of these knowledge areas and relates this literature to this body of work through project examples and case studies.

This chapter concludes with a review of the community of practice that this body of work is located within and contributes to.
Chapter 3: Contours, Colours and Shapes

Unpacking change making theory and proposing a model for community scale projects

Contours, Colours and Shapes distills this practice, which is at its essence an exploration into making change. It does this firstly by identifying three operational outcomes of the body of work. They are fostering participation, realising agency and generating community.

The chapter then goes on to explore how change is made, drawing insights from Holling’s theory of panarchy, which provides the theoretical support for unpacking the methodology used in this practice and for creating my own model.

The chapter concludes with the proposal of my own model to describe the methodology that I used, supported by the theoretical framework and practice outcomes. This model has formed into a vital component. Now part of my reflective practice, it has enabled me to learn from what I have done, and provides an accessible framework so that others can to. The model creation process has enabled me to transform from the guided to the guide.

Conclusion

In the conclusion, I reflect on the projects, how they have come together to form a body of work, and the changes that have occurred in my practice as a result of undertaking this reflective process. I then go on to identify the realisations I have uncovered as part of this process before drawing out the contributions to knowledge. Finally, I speculate on the direction of future work, both in terms of my practice and the broader field.
1
Circumnavigating Sharing
Circumnavigating Sharing

Setting the scene for the practice and introducing the projects

1.1 Introduction

In mid 2009 I received an email notifying me that The Clothing Exchange had been mentioned in an exciting new book. This wasn’t anything unusual. The Clothing Exchange tended to receive great media coverage and had been frequently cited in books. However, this one caught my attention. The book was by an American writer, receiving global coverage on the back of a TED talk, with pieces in the New York Times, BRW and The Economist; all under a snappy title of Collaborative Consumption (Botsman & Rogers, 2010). Who doesn’t love alliteration?

I read the book. I liked the book. But one thing got under my skin. The book was largely made up of case studies, or ‘pioneers’, of the collaborative consumption movement that Botsman had connected together, and in doing so claimed to be spotting a new trend. I felt that here we were, all of these ‘pioneers’ of the collaborative consumption movement, working very hard to ‘save the world’ for very little financial return, and this lady comes along with a cute name to claim the space, complete with international tours and consulting gigs to the big end of town. How could have I missed the junket!

When I voiced my complaint to a friend, I was quickly reminded that the reason I had missed this ‘trend’ and didn’t write the book myself was because I was too busy doing it to have the energy or brain power to describe it. And so, I took the opportunity that it was and joined the author, Rachel Botsman, in launching the book in Melbourne.
Being involved in the Melbourne launch of *Collaborative Consumption*, it occurred to me that:

1. There were a lot of ‘sharing’ initiatives going on in Melbourne (more so than in other cities in Australia) at that time.

2. Botsman was not the first person to identify this ‘new’ sharing economy.

3. Botsman is very good at catchy phrases, infographics and public speaking.

4. Potentially as a result of the point 3 above, it seemed everyone wanted to be involved somehow with this ‘new’ economy. The Clothing Exchange was hot stuff.

I can’t lie, I enjoyed my 10 seconds in the spotlight. I liked the idea that The Clothing Exchange was ‘pioneering’ a new form of consumption behaviour. But a nagging thought kept recurring: what was different between these new sharing initiatives and practices from the past?

To me, many of them were merely things ‘we’ used to do but have since forgotten. We are only one generation (if that) removed from growing most of our own food in our backyards, and sharing this across our fences with the neighbours we knew by name. Why did we need a start up with a trendy logo and an online platform to connect with a community that, physically, was already at our doorsteps? Did we really need an entrepreneur to remind us to share? Why couldn’t we all just go out there and do it ourselves?

This chapter can be loosely divided into two parts.

The first part sets the scene and provides the context for this body of work, the second introduces the practice and each of the projects. It commences with an exploration of the sharing economy and its disruptive effects on consumerist lifestyle practices. Following on from this, the political situation in Australia in 2009 is sketched (when this body of work began), revealing an environment ripe for grassroots activists to demonstrate and lead; an environment that I put down roots in, hoping for growth.
The second part of this chapter introduces the practice, and the three projects that give it form: The Foraging Commons, Reclaim the Curb, and Sharing Abundance. A narrative emerges describing how each of the projects developed, the journey taken to create them, and the knowledge areas that the work contributes to.

1.2 The Sharing Economy

Collaborative Consumption is but one book in a growing genre of books that identifies the emergence of sharing initiatives. Broadly referred to as the sharing economy, these books describe a ‘socio–economic ecosystem built around the sharing of human and physical resources’ (Matofksa, 2014). Allen and Berg describe the sharing economy as ‘a rise of new business models (“platforms”) that uproot traditional markets, break down industry categories, and maximise the use of scarce resources’ (2014).

The emergence of the sharing economy is due to the widespread availability of technology, particularly mobile technology, that has dramatically reduced transaction costs which previously prevented new business models from developing. For example, people can now book, hire and pay for a taxi service all on their mobile phones. As stated by Allen and Berg, ‘The sharing exchanges between individuals in much the same way as a traditional market, but does so in a flexible, self–governing, and potentially revolutionary way’ (2014).

By removing or lowering the barriers to entry into these markets, more people are able to enter them and innovation can be cultivated. Through automation of services and cheap distribution of information and products, transaction costs are significantly reduced. A broad audience can be easily reached, overcoming geographic boundaries to exchange. The knock–on effects can be highly beneficial, and include:

- a more sustainable use of underutilised and idle resources;
- flexible employment options;
- bottom up or self-regulating systems of exchange;
- lower overheads, which results in lower prices for consumers; and
- customised products and services for users.

Well known enterprises which have been labelled as part of the sharing economy include Uber, Airbnb, and Wikipedia. Initiatives collected under the ‘sharing economy’ umbrella have managed to re-brand ‘sharing’ to make it ‘more hip than hippie’ (Botsman, 2010), and that is what’s most interesting about them.

Fundamentally all societies are built on sharing resources, both natural (air, water and land) and built (roads, civic centres, bridges). Cultures are formed through creating shared history, whether it be through legend or song, and they work together through shared social, political and spiritual beliefs. Underpinning all of this is the notion of sharing food, which is a vital part of daily life and celebration. Sharing is part of our collective way of life which is ‘an economic fundament, a social bond and a virtue’ (Jaivin, 2014). Yet, at some point in the historical transition from society to economy, sharing became something that those not rich enough to buy could do. Sharing developed a brand disorder.

Criticisms of the sharing economy shed light on whether the hype around ‘sharing re-branded’ is all that it is cracked up to be. Like all ‘new’ movements in their formative stages, problems and criticisms have emerged.

The term ‘overshare’ was Webster’s New World Dictionary Word of the Year in 2008 (Jaivin, 2014) – perhaps the breaking of social norms and blurring of space between private and public information was being fast-tracked by sharing platforms. At a macro-level, governments have struggled to regulate and tax appropriately while incubating new businesses born of the sharing economy, leading to socio-economic tension – ask a taxi driver about Uber and be prepared for a long conversation.
While the internet initially exploded with websites facilitating sharing between neighbours, many of did not last and Fast Company declared The Sharing Economy dead (Kessler, 2015). However, in the wake of that article, a long procession of fledging businesses remains, and are still trying with varying degrees of success, to create (and monetise) new methods for sharing in their particular industries (Kessler, 2015).

Between the conjecture, what has undoubtedly emerged are new business models that utilise technology and social behaviours to disrupt traditional industry, and maximise the use of scarce resources (Allen & Berg, 2014). However, criticisms remain, and have stuck:

1. The title, the sharing economy, is misleading. It’s not about sharing, but rather entrepreneurship and providing access to new ways of doing business. Technology has encouraged the emergence of ‘micro-capitalists’ who can share (read: rent) underutilised resources such as spare rooms or power tools. As a result, it trivialises the notion of sharing, reducing it to an economic transaction, rather than something we do out of benevolence or civic duty. We remain entrapped economic actors, with our human instinct to share repressed.

2. Government regulation and taxation has been unable to keep pace with new business entrants. For example, in some cities Airbnb providers are not subject to the same regulations as hotel providers even though the service is inherently the same thing. The public debate playing out in the media at the moment is the role of government in this situation, ensuring a level playing field for business, passing on benefits to consumers, whilst protecting consumers’ safety. Some criticisms go so far as to suggest that because these new entrants often avoid regulation and tax, they are inherently antisocial.

3. The emergence of ‘micro-capitalists’ and the disruption to existing industry could displace ‘legitimate’ 9–5 jobs with ‘insecure grey market jobs’ – this is particularly true of micro-tasking platforms and ‘crowdsourcing’. This new way of doing business has the ability to undermine stable labour conditions, and create a race to the bottom on wages.
4. The exclusive use of technology can be isolating for some, neglecting people who do not have access to, or the skills to use, the technology; for example, the elderly or those on low incomes. Should individuals not have a computer, internet access or a credit card, or understand how to use them, how are they to take advantage of the so-called ‘benefits to consumers’ of these new business models?

5. The transaction cost of borrowing something from someone else, coordinating the exchange and returning it, can be more cumbersome than just going out and buying it new. As a result, the sharing economy can manifest our most wasteful consumerist tendencies.

The problem with the economy, of which the sharing economy is simply an extension, is simple. As stated by the founder of Neighbor: an online platform that allows people to form groups that share things, 'Nobody gives a shit' (Kessler, 2015).

The sharing economy doesn’t change who we are, it simply tweaks some of our behaviours at the margins. If we don’t give a shit about the environment or our neighbours today, the sharing economy simply pours fuel on the consumerist fire. By renting our home out on Airbnb, we can afford that new pair of shoes. We get our website built for $2,000 overseas, not $20,000 by the guy down the road, and wonder why no-one can afford our designer gift cards at the local craft market. Tax revenues shrink and we complain about the roads, the schools and public hospitals, because the sharing economy, without a new ethic, is just the old economy on a new platform.
1.3 Consumerist lifestyles

The emergence of the sharing economy, and the torrent of media activity that surrounded it, highlighted our deep desire to connect with others, take care of our environment and engage in a gentler form of capitalism, albeit in a hamfisted way.

Of course we don’t need an internet start–up to facilitate the sharing of goods; we could just knock on the door or pick up the phone to ask a friend, or use the opportunity to make a new one! But now the fad has faded, we simply see new businesses using technology to disrupt markets, while mimicking the fundamental ethic of the businesses that they are replacing.

It is hard to hide that the sharing economy, in its current manifestation, is aimed at middle–class, educated people in developed nations. These are people that enjoy a continual satisfaction of their basic needs, leaving materialist wants to dominate their daily concerns and in turn fuel a consumer product driven economy. These wants are fuelled by social constructs continually played on by marketers and their sales tactics; of course, the products on offer do not fulfil the craving – they exacerbate it.

Diet Coke will not help you woo the attractive man from the ad, and that sports car will not make the beautiful women swoon. As Max–Neef’s analysis revealed, materialist answers to questions of meaning do not always satisfy as intended (1991). Hope remains that the next purchase will fill that void, yet the cycle of want creation continues. It is critical for the success of consumerism that people’s wants remain insatiable (Bauman, 2007).

The main drivers that fuel socially constructed wants come back to the human need for a sense of belonging. This manifests itself as the desire to buy products and services that:

- help the individual identify as belonging to a certain group of people, by association;
- help the individual feel admired by a certain group of people.

Consumerism and individualism are close friends.
According to Heath and Potter (2005), all consumers are either participating in direct competition or are consuming in defence of each other. The main purpose for those companies selling products and services is to create an ‘aspirational gap’ between what people want and what they have, to maintain the drive to consume (Schor, 1998).

The media plays a critical role in manifesting this endless competitive race. Current popular media profiles celebrity lifestyles as the cultural norm through the rise of reality television and social media, raising the benchmark for people’s aspirations (Schor, 2005). The continual desire for more reinforces the social myth that the greater the wealth, the more stuff you can buy, the better your life will be.

Despite the consumer treadmill most people in developed nations find themselves on, increased consumption and wealth does not improve individual wellbeing. Hamilton states that in Australia, ‘despite several decades of sustained economic growth, our societies are no happier than they were’ (Hamilton, 2002, p12). Further to this, a study from the University of Chicago found that Americans are no happier now than during the 1950s when consumer lifestyles were just beginning to be formed, despite nearly doubling their consumption habits (Jackson, 2005). These findings should not be surprising as the promise of consumerism to increase or secure our happiness is ultimately flawed due to the very nature of consumerism, which is based on the continual dissatisfaction of individuals (Bauman, 2007).

After more than half a century of consumer capitalism dominating our lifestyles, and the anti-capitalist sentiment being drowned out by activist picket lines, the sharing economy has fostered a generation of entrepreneurs and users who understand that possessions lead to complications and experiences bring happiness.

If the sharing economy isn’t leading the revolution from the ground up, who can we turn to?
1.4 Political Environment in Australia

The summer of 2009 saw the political culture of Australia in a time of great flux. Hopes around significant global environmental reform had been all but abandoned as the climate summit in Copenhagen drew to a close without a binding agreement. The media was beginning to grumble that the Labor government had ‘lost its way’ (Chubb, 2014). The much anticipated carbon tax was failing to gain acceptance with the Greens siding with the Opposition to block the legislation (a decision they would surely regret as years would pass before significant environmental action would be taken at a federal level and the reincarnations of the carbon tax would become more and more watered down).

Over the next few months into 2010 and following on into 2011, a landmark leadership spill would occur and another federal election would result in a hung Parliament, where the balance of power would be held by three independent members of Parliament (Chen, 2013).

With this political turbulence and general lack of environmental reform, the opportunity was ripe for grassroots action to take place (Rustin, 2011). In parallel to this roller coaster ride of environmental reform and political turmoil, my practice emerged, located at the other end of the social spectrum.

Where politicians travelled by plane to talk to strangers around the globe, I walked the streets to talk to neighbours. Where complex environmental reform got lost in global politics, I crafted simple, handwritten messages to share fruit locally. Where leadership spills left individuals isolated, with blood on the hands of the victorious, my practice engaged with communities, united over digging, dirt, and a shared sense of common ground.

Simple actions, within the capability of individuals to execute in their local community, away from big government and bureaucracy, were resonating with the general public more so at this time. There was a lot of interest and motivation from a willing audience to be involved in the type of projects I was working on because they empowered individuals and groups to do something ‘constructive’, even it did just mean being together, at one time in one place, causing a ripple on a vast ocean.
Through a collaborative consumption lens, Botsman (2010) identified four reasons why this type of activity was on the rise at this point in time

1. Renewed belief in the importance of community.

2. A torrent of peer to peer social networking sites and real time technologies.

3. Pressing unresolved environmental concerns.

4. A global recession that fundamentally shocked consumer behaviours.

I would add to that list, a growing unease and frustration with political leaders.

1.5 My Emerging Practice

This body of work commenced in the summer of 2009 when, upon moving to a new town (Newcastle, NSW), I took to the streets and walked.

One foot in front of another as many explorers had done before me, I sought to understand the spaces and character of this new place I found myself in. I had chosen the leafy inner city suburb of Cooks Hill to base myself and my family in. We arrived not out of choice, but because my partner’s work had relocated.

Cooks Hill is a beautiful suburb bustling with gentrification. The narrow streets are lined with Victorian terrace houses, with the pavement buckling under the enormous Moreton Bay figs and their root systems making pavement walking more like a series of mini mountain climbs.

Like all older suburbs, the main roads are connected with an intricacy of laneways that weave themselves around, some big enough for road traffic, others just for pedestrians. As I walked through this place, I realised I was always walking on the edge of something, such as the road
or a fence line. I became more interested in the unmapped things of this suburb, namely the trees and plants, as they offered stark contrast to this densely built up place, like a narrow portal into wildness.

Environmental historian William Cronon describes ‘wildness (as opposed to wilderness) as something that can be found anywhere; in the seemingly tame fields and woodlots of Massachusetts, in the cracks of a Manhattan sidewalk, even in the cells of our own bodies’ (Cronon, cited in Hetherington, 2003).

I had gotten to know my way around this suburb so I could navigate the fastest way between points A and B, but now I found myself exploring the most ‘interesting’ way from points A to B. What drew my interest as I explored the place around me was where the natural world was blossoming in the most unlikely places, in the middle of a city on curb sides, between fences, and on forgotten pockets of land.

Bradley L. Garret is an urban explorer who explores places such as sites marked for demolition, sites under construction, or those shut off from public access. He was involved in the London B Team, and describes urban exploration as ‘a search for experiences located at the porous, live intersections between bodies and places in (re)discovered locations’ (Garret, 2013).

I began to find I was generating meaning from the spaces between nature and culture, and I was particularly interested in where this boundary blurs. Inspired by an artist collective in Los Angeles called Fallen Fruit, I decided to document where food was being grown on and over public land in Cooks Hill, to create a public fruit map. At the time, Fallen Fruit was mapping their local area and sharing their maps on their website, downloadable for all. I wanted my map to contribute to this growing body of knowledge (Fallen Fruit, 2010).

As I walked and mapped the more I realised that I was joining in a tradition of explorers documenting newfound places, walking quite literally in their footsteps. Unexpectedly for me, I found that I was documenting and celebrating a feature that modern cartography had
chosen to omit. Food growing in this place had been overlooked, being replaced with the markings of major shopping centres. But at the same time, food growing in a place offers unquestionable insights into the way of life in times past.

This process of urban exploration and documentation I was engaging in creates a playful counter narrative to the history of the place. Garrett (2013) describes history in these forgotten places as ‘a social form of knowledge, crafted by the multitude’ (p. 41). By shining a new light on a place, I felt part of history’s creation.

As I mapped the suburb of Cooks Hill, methodically walking up and down every single street within the suburban boundaries, I found that the boundaries of a place were at the same time as liberating as they were binary. I liked that I only had so much of a place to map, otherwise I could be going forever! So I embraced the suburban boundary, feeling free requires embracing constraints.

However, as I mapped more and more fruit trees and plants that crossed over from private to public land I was curious about where the boundary of trespassing stood. Was there an imaginary line where the border of the private property was marked, so anything over public land was available for all? But what if I could stand on public land and still reach the fruit. Was this fair game?

At the time all I was doing was mapping, the process of recording a location, but the purpose of the maps was to share the location of food, not just for a passive sightseer but for people to engage in the landscape and taste it.

While I was questioning the impacts of the map I was creating, Fallen Fruit in LA launched a campaign titled ‘Plant the Perimeter’, encouraging residents to plant fruit trees along the perimeter of their land to encourage sharing and neighbourly interaction. Fallen Fruit was proposing that fruit growing along the fence line could be the proverbial olive branch between urban foragers (those people who eat what they come across without cultivating anything themselves) and urban growers. However, the philosopher, Henri Lefebvre,
suggests that ‘the organization of space is never neutral, but always entangled in complex
power arrangements’ (Lefebvre, quoted in de Certeau, 1984). Geographer Tim Edensor
expands on this tension:

Perhaps it is the contemporary Western city that ... tensions are most evident, the site of an
ongoing battle between regulatory regimes concerned with strategies of surveillance and
aesthetic monitoring, and tacticians who transgress or confound them, who seek out or

Walking the streets with a camera and a piece of paper, stopping momentarily to write
something down and take a photo, sure does create interest, particularly in a post 9/11 world.
At the time I hadn’t fully processed my actions, I was just doing it for the joy of exploration
and the possibilities it revealed.

Explaining this ‘enjoyment of the journey’ to people who walked past led to confused looks
and ambiguity. But walking around collecting information for an art project makes much
more sense, particularly in the artistic suburb of Cooks Hill. Labelling the activity of urban
eXploration and mapping as ‘art’ lent me an artificial legitimacy that I needed, so that the
power struggles of space could be overcome (Garrett, 2013).

As I walked, following the boundaries of suburb, street, pathway, fence and map, the power
tensions made possible by regimes of order, seemed to fade with every new discovery, or
lack thereof. The mapping exercise of Cooks Hill did uncover some wonderful fruit trees and
edible plants, most notably 30 something rosemary bushes!

Interestingly, my meandering uncovered a lot of space with not much planted on it. The
opportunity to grow more was abundant, particularly on street curbs where grass reigned,
and I was inspired to see it change. I found my mind off dreaming somewhere of projects
with people digging into these spaces, planting productive gardens, sharing the fruit, and
working collaboratively. As I walked, I realised that this place I was engaging in was teaching
me, and as such I was given agency. The process of urban exploration was giving me the
opportunity to create a narrative I could shape, rather than waiting for a narrative to be
offered to me (Garrett, 2013).
1.6 The Foraging Commons

The exercise of mapping the commons was as much a project for me as it was for others. I was inspired by the work at Fallen Fruit and so had always intended on sharing my map; however, I never contemplated that the action of sharing my findings would have any repercussions. How could walking, noticing, making an observation, recording and sharing ever be bad ... or good? It just was.

Once I had finished walking and recording my suburb of Cooks Hill in Newcastle, I made a decision to not only share the map with Fallen Fruit, but to transfer my hand drawn version to an electronic one powered by Google maps. To accompany this, I created a blog like website using a free Wordpress platform. Finally, I posted my project on social media sites such as Twitter.

By doing this I was able to connect with other people just like me all over the world, all mapping food treasure in their local area. Discovering and connecting with other mappers across Australia and internationally was embracing and supportive – a community of like minded groups and individuals who were united by their endeavours to support local food production, connecting with the local environment and celebrating shared ownership.

Shortly after this connection and embrace with other mappers, it was collectively decided that a larger, more comprehensive mapping platform be developed which would combine all the sites. This would enable the continuation of mapping should one group dissolve or attention of one person move on. Once all the sites were collected together on a free Google maps platform, using the site became difficult with search functions unavailable and management of data not standardised. To overcome this, a customised mapping web application was needed. The process of gaining support from a broader audience and funding through grants began by reaching out via community focused web applications such as Plan Big, and social media applications such as Twitter.

The project was picked up by a journalist from Sydney writing about the local food movement. An article, profiling the project and other local food community centric projects, appeared in the Sun Herald in October 2010 on a Sunday (Wood, 2010). It included
a photograph of me in a community garden on public land and a section of the online map featuring locations of where food is grown on, or over public land, across three lower north shore suburbs in Sydney.

This article and the mapping project outraged many. Most of the people that came forward with complaints were members of a community garden where I was photographed for the article. I wasn’t living in Sydney at the time of the media release but family members were. Using the White Pages, members from the community garden personally visited the house of those relatives living in Sydney to confront the author (apparently me!) about the actions. I missed being confronted with pitchforks at dawn and, in lieu, a conversation ensued over email and through comments left on the blog.

The members of the community garden felt that by sharing the locations of where food is grown on or over public land, I was taking advantage of their hard work in developing the garden and was promoting the idea of taking without contributing. Their arguments were highly emotive and demonstrate the deep passions stirred by my transgression.

Here are a few of my favourite quotes:

“It is a very thin veil that you cloak yourself in with regards to your statement that if “the map not be used in the way it was intended then unfortunately it is out of my control.” Similarly to all of those businesses (think Napster and other file and torrent sharing sites) that are currently being prosecuted for enabling illegal behaviour, you too have a responsibility (if you believe it only to be a moral one) to ensure that the information that you publish is accurate and do everything you can to reduce the risk it will be misunderstood and used for unintended purposes.”

“Why should I continue to donate my TIME and MONEY for people like yourself to reap all of the benefits.”

“Your information is likely to spell the end of the Community Garden, a garden that was built from the ground up with our bare hands. Volunteers are highly unlikely to continue a commitment if the fruits of their labours are stolen from them.”

“The line ‘It tastes so much better, and if you pick respectfully, community gardening can alleviate pressure on our food systems.’ This last line, especially with respect to the fact that the MPCG is in fact labelled a ‘Community Garden,’ is particularly distressing for all of us involved. Moreover, the proof is in the pudding, that numerous people (some with article in hand) came down on Sunday to see what food was on offer for them to pick and take home.”

Footnote: Full transcripts of emails can be found in the Appendix.
The project featured in the Sun Herald in 2010. It included a photograph of me in a community garden on public land and a section of the online map featuring locations of where food is grown on.
What had started as a personal project of interest grew, in what felt like overnight, into a broader study of perceived land ownership and rights, community engagement and perceptions of waste in a developed urban landscape.

It occurred to me that these gardeners of the commons, of land given by their council to the community, was being protected as if a private retreat of an exclusive club.

The transition of the project between private and public was facilitated by online creative commons licensing and mainstream media coverage. The transition was smooth in likeminded circles but turbulent beyond. The support of other mappers across Australia and internationally contradicted starkly with the backlash of a small gardening group.

I found that the same motivations uniting the group of mappers were the same as those that divided the broader community. Groups involved in community gardens, and individuals who openly cultivated land outside their private land holdings, were particularly perturbed by the idea of sharing not only the locations of their cultivated sites, but also the produce. They felt that as the ones putting the effort into growing, they should not have to share with others. Their actions, although motivated by broader global issues such as climate change, fossil fuel depletion and food security, were put into practice to protect themselves, not others.

The self-interest motivator, often cited as a positive agent of change in green purchases and involvement in the sustainability movement was, in this instance, used as a tool to identify and segregate socially. Counter to trends around sharing, and discourse around the unifying nature of community food production, the backlash was evidence of a discord between sustainability intentions and selflessness. The experience begged the question: which was more important, a society growing food for themselves? Or a society willing to share food grown together?
1.6.1 Unpacking the Critics

To unpack the experience resulting from the media coverage of The Foraging Commons, I had to personally distance myself from the project, so that the criticism received could be processed constructively (where possible). My ego had taken a hit, but I knew there was more to be explored.

Once I felt I was at a point where I could sift through the emails and comments from the blog, I sat down and distilled the objective criticism from the subjective banter. I also took the time to further research the area of online mapping platforms that document and share where food is grown on and over public land, public perceptions of urban foraging, and the modern sustainability movement more broadly.

I combined by research insights with personal reflections, which unfolded into a process of sorting through thoughts and criticisms about the project, and how I was going to act on this. Some of the outcomes required me to rethink and improve The Foraging Commons, while other outcomes identified the need for a whole new project to be developed. In these instances, the space for a new project had been identified but more research was needed before giving each project a new life.

The prospect of forming new projects was both exciting and terrifying. What if I experience a similar backlash to those projects? Is there a demand for more projects of this type? Am I cannibalising myself by offering too many projects in the one area, both in terms of audience and media? Should I be trying to ‘do it all’?

The overarching driver for me to develop more projects was the desire to create a cohesive narrative around this type of social, everyday pro-environmental behaviour, and this drive won the day.

Continual iterations of my practice has become a major theme where feedback is woven into the project evolution, and the process is repeated time and time again. New projects that have emerged build upon the previous one in a circular spiral motion. Failing is not a
concept that is relevant here, or if it is, it would be that I failed to fail enough. I don’t view The Foraging Commons, or the feedback received after the article was published, as failing but rather an experience and a chance to reflect, learn and improve.

The table to the right documents the feedback received and the reflections this generated, linked to an outcome and action for future work.

1.6.2 Moving On

The Foraging Commons caught the attention of another journalist 18 months after the first article was published. Writing for a major Melbourne based newspaper, the journalist asked to interview and photograph me, and profile the project. I agreed. However, learning my lesson from the first, I interviewed him first and ensured I had final review of the article before publishing.

The article was well written and the journalist was sympathetic with the motivations of the project. However, the editors of the paper refused to run the piece. Upon entering into discussions with the editors, the journalist and their lawyers argued that in common law in Australia, fruit overhanging the fence from private property still belongs to the original owner based on the location of where the tree grows.

So, for instance, if the fruit was overhanging a neighbour’s land, they could prune the tree but had to return the fruit (and any prunings) to the owners. In the case of public land, or council land as it tends to be referred to, the council should return the fruit and prunings. Therefore, under common law, The Foraging Commons is an illegal project promoting stealing and the article would not run out of fear of implicating me. I was amused by these discussions as despite its seemingly highly illegal nature, all those concerned spoke colourfully about a time past when they used to climb the neighbour’s mulberry tree to enjoy the best of the berries up high, or would be sent out to find a much needed lemon on a summer day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback and Reflections from The Foraging Commons Launch</th>
<th>Outcome and Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initial Reactions</strong></td>
<td>TFC is a contribution to a broader conversation around foraging globally and connecting people locally. It acts as a unifying place for Australian and NZ foragers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Although there are many people called to action by the same problems, they are not unified by this.</td>
<td>Reframing the activity of foraging through advocacy and positive development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foraging is for hippies, poor people, undesirables, social outcasts, etc.</td>
<td>Reframing the activity of foraging through advocacy and positive development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media management.</td>
<td>If the project generates media coverage, more control over the tone and positioning that the journalist is planning on taking, including final sign off of direct quotes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Distilling the Received Criticism**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Promoting an ‘illegal’ act.</th>
<th>Reframing the activity of foraging through advocacy and positive development.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People aren’t able to identify plants that are edible and those that aren’t.</td>
<td>Education around identification of places to harvest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘But that’s mine’.</td>
<td>Addressing ownership issues and proposing equitable ways of sharing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘They take too much’</td>
<td>Call for an ethical framework and etiquette in which people that participate in foraging activities can be guided by.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘They have not contributed’.</td>
<td>Addressing ownership issues and proposing equitable ways of sharing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1: Feedback and Reflections from The Foraging Commons Launch**
They had all taken part in these activities, their childhood memories were warmed by the experience, but to publish it and promote it was now viewed too high risk. The contradiction only fuelled my curiosity.

This experience highlighted for me the differences between common law and community law. I understood that common law outlined the basic ownership structure governing fruit picking; however, the community law around this indicated the opposite. Despite the activity being illegal, many people do it, many people are enriched by it, and it forms part of a collective identity. Not dissimilar to salvaging disused furniture from the side of the street at hard rubbish collection time, picking over hanging fruit from neighbour’s yard, this daily, incidental sharing should be a celebrated act.

The editors of the newspaper eventually sided with me, and the article ran. Interestingly, there was no negative backlash this time, just a continual conversation around how informal sharing could happen over the back fence.

1.7 Reclaim the Curb

Imagine, if the streets were lined with fruit trees, empty spaces were filled with vegetable gardens and we were able to live amongst a growing abundance of food.

This was the concept behind the project, Reclaim the Curb, an activist collective formed to take action around forgotten pieces of public space by enabling those people who use it, to reclaim it by planting it out with productive edible plants. This project was developed in response to the finding from The Foraging Commons project that there is actually not that much food growing on public spaces. The project was also used as a campaign tool to question the role of community in decisions and actions that take place ‘on the ground’. The collective operates on a principle of asking for forgiveness rather than permission, bypassing council and organisational bureaucracy in order to enable community scale action.
I had relocated back to Melbourne in early 2011, lured to old haunts by good friends, job prospects and the creative community I desired, having failed to find the same in Newcastle.

Renew Newcastle, the headline creative enterprise that linked unused spaces with artists and community groups, so tackling urban decay in Newcastle’s city centre, was in fact created and managed by a Marcus Westbury, from Melbourne’s inner north. This was my space too – my tribe was here, so I must be too.

The collective of Reclaim the Curb was formed in 2012 in Melbourne. An email was sent out which snowballed and spread through personal networks of like-minded folk. The email proposed this collective and requested people who would like to be part of this group to come forward and those that had a site, materials or skills to be in contact to support this initiative. From the first email, 15 people came forward to form this collective and three sites were nominated to be reclaimed.

To make change happen, the group intentionally decided to take an unorthodox approach of asking for forgiveness instead of permission. This enabled the group to build up momentum on projects rather than putting their energies into getting lost in local government bureaucracy.

1.7.1 Civil Disobedience

In 2008, six British Greenpeace protestors climbed the smokestack of the Kingsnorth coal–fired power plant located in Kent, and successfully painted a slogan on it before being arrested. They were charged with criminal damages, which in court they did not dispute but argued that due to the damage to the atmosphere caused by the carbon dioxide emissions from this power plant, their actions could and should be understood. They acted to prevent greater harm (Hamilton, 2009).
Civil disobedience as defined by the Australian Greenpeace chief executive: ‘Civil disobedience is about peacefully standing up for a fair go or to stop something precious from being destroyed’ (Ritter, 2013).

Although environmental activism has had a long history of ‘overstepping the mark’ under the pretence of preventing greater harm (for example, Sea Shepherd’s activities to stop illegal whaling, or anti-forestry protesters ‘locking on’ to stop logging) what is really interesting is the number of high profile social commentators calling for normal everyday people to act lawfully, and disobediently.

The arguments that Clive Hamilton and Naomi Klein (to specify just two) are making are underpinned by the environmental necessity to act now to stop irreversible catastrophic environmental harm, the distrust of governments and big business, and the impatience that comes from waiting for top-down solutions, despite them being in our best interest. As Hamilton states, ‘victory could come too late’ (Hamilton, 2009).

When the Kingsnorth activists appeared at court, a jury heard arguments from both sides. Bravely, this jury accepted that the protesters had a lawful excuse for causing damage to the power plant, and they were acquitted.

Closer to home, the call for civil disobedience is growing louder as successive governments continue to ignore the dire need for severe environmental action. Instead the calls from big business ring louder and allowances for long leases, less environmental policy and more access to previously restricted areas are characterising political discourse.

In NSW, the Maules Creek mine has recently come under public scrutiny due to a new mine being given the ‘green light’. The new mine will harvest 12 million tonnes of coal, emitting 30 million tonnes of carbon dioxide every year for the next 30 years. To put those numbers into perspective, the emissions created just from this one mine are more than the entire annual emissions output of New Zealand.
Protesters believe that this coal should stay in the ground, avoiding the resulting emissions. They believe the offset model agreed to by the Australian government, where mining companies are required to buy surrounding farmland to compensate for the natural forests they are destroying, was a major error by the then Minister for the Environment, Greg Hunt.

_The Saturday Paper_ published an article using the Maules Creek mine protest as an example of the changing faces of activists (Trenoweth, 2014). In the article, 92-year-old Bill Ryan was quoted as saying:

_I was willing to put my life on the line in the Second World War, so putting my body on the line here is just a small inconvenience ... It became clear to me, after Copenhagen, that governments were only paying lip service to action on climate change. So I became involved in non-violent protest. I'll do whatever I can to make sure there's a habitable world for my grandchildren and my great-grandchildren. I feel compelled to play some small part_ (Trenoweth, 2014).

Further south, the protest in Tasmania over the old growth forests have taken an interesting turn. Despite new additions to the UNESCO World Heritage site in Tasmania in June 2013, the current government has requested that 74,000 hectares of forest be delisted, because apparently it has already been logged! The potential delisting of the site risks a public ‘slap in the face’ by Australia to the authority and legitimacy of the UNESCO World Heritage title. It also reflects, perhaps accurately, where the priorities of the Australian government lie – wherever there are profits, there are compromises.

Interestingly in this case, Tasmania’s timber industry has actually opposed the delisting, at least publicly (Darby, 2014). The Florentine Valley has a long history of activism and contradiction. Best illustrated in Anna Krien’s non-fiction debut, Into the Woods (2012), she visits the administration offices for one of the big logging companies in the Florentine Valley and sees a photograph stuck up on one of the desks of a protester, locked onto a tree but dressed in costume to look like an archangel, posted there because the logger admits his concerns are the same as the protestors. This is his livelihood too.
Living with contradictions is possible, particularly for a short while. However, there comes a time when the contradictions must be worked through, to clear a way forward.

The Reclaim the Curb project operates within the field of civil disobedience albeit at a much smaller and more localised level than the examples cited above. By proposing that the users of the space should be the ones to decide what is done with it, how it is used and responsible for making it happen and maintaining it, there is a power shift from waiting for governments or organisations to act, to taking the matter into the hands of the people.

1.7.2 Ask Forgiveness, not Permission, to grow action

By encouraging and fostering people to take responsibility for the space around them, the Reclaim the Curb collective was purposefully undermining the local government bureaucracy and jurisdiction over public space in their municipality. It was an intentional directive of the collective to operate under the notion of asking for forgiveness rather than permission, to get things done and not lose momentum through clunky decision making. It was made clear to all collaborators with the collective that this was intention of the group, and none of the collaborators have declined further involvement.

By adopting this ethos, the collective has been able to mobilise quickly and foster creative solutions and innovations.

The first site located on Nash Street, Northcote, was reclaimed in May 2012. The community where this site is located is highly motivated, sustainability minded, fairly well heeled and already socialising with each other. It was an easy site for the first Reclaim the Curb project and offered a supportive environment to test the project concept.

With the guidance of a landscape designer who donated his time, raised beds were installed and filled with seasonal vegetables and herbs, various fruit trees were planted, and signage was erected to encourage sharing of the produce. The community paid for all materials, and the Reclaim the Curb collective donated the manpower.
After the initial working bee, the feedback from the community was positive with everyone excited about the new use of this space. However, there were requests for a space to facilitate the sharing and swapping of excess backyard and public produce. Reclaim the Curb engaged the help of some carpenter volunteers to erect a small shed on the nature strip where produce could be held and the community could access it to share and take produce.

This first project was highly successful with an active community and the funds to bring the design to fruition. The council soon became aware of the site and used the site as a ‘stop over’ in their cycle tour of urban agriculture initiatives in the municipality. The cycle tour was highly successful with the first a sell out, and subsequent tours highly popular. During that first tour, a member of the community who was influential in materialising this project spoke to the cyclists about the journey and installing this public garden.

Despite the success and apparent approval of the site by the council by including it in this cycle tour, the community at Nash Street were soon contacted and requested to remove the small swapping shed as it did not comply with council regulations. The shed is now located on a driveway of a sympathetic community member, right on the boundary so that it may still be used by the street residents.

The system had seen the tantalising prospect of new futures, and after a momentary embrace, had retreated to the comfort of the rules.

The Reclaim the Curb collective was established to avoid being burdened by council bureaucracy, and through this action research it had identified a barrier to enabling action. The Nash Street site demonstrates the gap between ideology and practice at a bureaucracy level. On the one hand the council is supportive of these types of community-led initiatives to create urban agricultural sites in their municipality, but on the other hand are still enforcing regulation that doesn’t support this. This learning highlights the need for progressive change within the planning regulations of councils to be more in line with the ideology held. This experience gained from reclaiming public land at Nash Street demonstrates the importance of such community-enabled activities in calling out these contradictions, and making their resolution possible.
Further to this, the question has been raised of how to distribute food grown privately within a community without monetary exchange. The community at Nash Street proposed a shared space that was convenient and flexible, sheltered from weather, and clearly enabled sharing of excess produce. The shed concept was an extension of the quintessential suburban box of fruit left near the sidewalk for passers-by to help themselves, but collected all the produce into one central spot. Should this communal shed idea not be available to particular communities and streetscapes, then what other service design mechanisms could be engaged with? This question is further explored in the following section, Sharing Abundance.

1.8 Sharing Abundance

Sharing Abundance is a viable, local food system involving mutual exchange of fresh produce and labour in a fun, social way. By coordinating groups of volunteers to harvest excess backyard produce and maintain fruit trees, waste is reduced and pest and disease in fruit trees are managed. The produce harvested is shared between those involved and those in need, such as local schools and hospitals.

This project was inspired into action by similar programs developing throughout the UK and Canada. However, in these locations, every time a new community wanted to use this harvesting framework they needed to set it up from scratch. Through the Sharing Abundance project, I wanted to explore how I could amplify this type of activity through promotion, and by creating a ‘how to’ guide that was built out of the experiences gained by running the program.

Sharing Abundance aims to share those resources that can be usefully applied elsewhere, and offer an easily applied framework for all communities seeking to start a local food system of their own.
A series of harvests were held over three months in early 2012. Despite receiving a generous amount of media around the project, the number of volunteers attracted to the project far outweighed the number of trees available to harvest. Trees that have been successfully registered, harvested and involved in this program were directly sought out by writing a note to the homeowner and delivering it to their letterbox, or knocking on their front door. This type of informal direct marketing received a 100 per cent success rate.

During the pilot testing of Sharing Abundance, four trees were picked over five occasions, harvesting approximately 84kg of fruit. The majority of this fruit was donated to the public school located closest to the fruit tree.

1.8.1 Enabling Non-monetary Exchange

By incorporating criticism received from The Foraging Commons, Sharing Abundance was anticipated to be fairly well accepted and received by the general public. It addressed the issues of backyard trees not being managed, which can cause outbreaks in disease that ultimately affects commercial growers, and gave the owner of the tree an outlet to share their produce that was beneficial to the community in a transparent way.

Sharing Abundance made sure the private property owner was in control of the exchange, albeit subtly and persuasively prompted by their community.

Although the project did not receive the public outcry generated by The Foraging Commons, some interesting issues have arisen from it around ownership and sharing. It seems the fruit is either a nuisance for the owner, meaning they don’t value it at all and are happy for it to be taken away; or they feel their fruit is far superior and they should be reimbursed for it in some way, usually monetarily.
Sharing Abundance proposes a non-monetary exchange that is mutually beneficial for all stakeholders, including the broader community. The harvest is divided three ways: to the owner of the tree, to the harvest volunteers, and to a community enterprise such as a local school. It has often been suggested that this final third could be sold at a local shop to raise funds and awareness around local food. However, it is the community dividend that Sharing Abundance provides that makes this project both acceptable to those people who need to monetise their produce, and appealing for media coverage.

By operating without money, an alternative means of exchange needs to be navigated, made difficult in a highly privatised urban world that has concreted over history’s tracks.

### 1.8.2 The Lost Art of Giving and Receiving

Asking schools to accept donations of free fruit has provided another interesting insight into this project. Although in the end all schools have been happy to receive the fruit, they have been unsure of the protocol of accepting (implying that perhaps this type of donation doesn’t happen regularly). And when physically receiving the fruit, they have been awkward in how to say thank you and receive graciously.

Research around sharing reveals that when people reflect on the idea of sharing they tend to discuss it, heavily laden with nostalgia, with rose coloured goggles on. They hark back to a time of the past (imagined or otherwise). Some go further and project that perhaps sharing is the simple solution many are in search for to cure today’s social and environmental problems.

In the much hyped book, What’s Mine is Yours: The Rise of Collaborative Consumption (2010), Botsman and Rogers anticipate that through the increasing use and availability of sharing network sites, a new social capital will emerge that will offer a new trading platform based not on dollars, but on reputation.
Meanwhile, social commentary around such sites create a sense of hype with little real action underneath – if anything at all. Perhaps it is still early days in the re-emergence of reputation based economic exchange.

But why is it taking so long in an age where technology and communication innovation has never moved so fast?

As it turns out, people are willing to ‘share’ items, but not because they are empowered through selfless collaboration and common use or ownership. Rather, they view sharing as an act of generosity. As a result, we are terrible at receiving. Rooney is currently exploring sharing in Australia. So far her research has uncovered two major reasons for this hesitation around taking and giving. The first is the cultural power around needing to be obligation free, and the second is the value placed on privacy.

In Rooney’s words:

> Giving is promoted as being ideologically and morally sound. We are constantly being reminded to give more and take less, yet perhaps we forget that to receive can be an act of giving. As one research participant said: ‘to learn to receive with an open heart may be one of the most difficult things’, yet I believe it may also be one of the most effective methods of community development (Rooney, 2012).

### 1.8.3 Sharing Abundance Case Studies

Brunswick is an inner northern suburb of Melbourne renowned for its strong immigrant culture. Like many inner suburbs of cities, gentrification is changing the space with students and young professionals moving into these areas, drawn to their proximity to universities, public transport and the city centre. I lived in Brunswick for 18 months and during this time enjoyed the bounty of fruiting trees planted by immigrants who valued growing their own.
One such tree was a large mandarin tree overhanging a laneway that I often used to cut through city blocks. It was abundant with fruit with a few rotting on the ground. I knocked on the front door of the house and requested to harvest their mandarins and share the bounty of the tree. The door was answered by an Italian looking woman, in her forties. She was accommodating to my request but did not exchange pleasantries or offer an introduction to herself – despite me telling her I lived just around the corner. She also refused to take any of the harvest and was happy for me to take it.

I harvested the tree with the help of a friend and hauled the amazing bounty home. The mandarins were delivered to East Brunswick Primary School who were thrilled to receive the fruit (and any more that I might come across!). This Italian woman, however, lingered with me. So as thanks I baked a mandarin cake for her. I delivered this to her door, that evening. When she answered the door, she was concerned I had returned but once I gifted the cake her attitude changed immediately. She introduced herself by name and introduced me to her family members who were visiting at that time. She was so overwhelmed by this simple gesture of thanks and invited me to help myself for future harvesting of her trees.

I found this experience really interesting as the owner obviously didn’t value her fruit and did not feel the need to experience any form of passing community engagement. However, when I did return with a cake to thank her, all of a sudden her communication changed and she was open to a more connected experience.

Perhaps my sincerity of taking fruit and following up by thanking her, in a way that she could relate to (I imagine the daughter of Italian migrants would be all too familiar with gifts of food), broke down barriers between us, or potentially she was pre-occupied earlier and didn’t have the time or inclination to be hassled by someone who wanted to harvest her tree! Either way, this experience has offered an interesting insight into the range of responses the project received and how to build up engagement and support.

Who can say no to cake?
The second experience of harvesting urban fruit trees contrasted the warmth of this initial experience completely. I spotted a large red apple tree in the front garden of a house near me in Brunswick. Despite the tree growing on private land, the vast majority of the fruit was easily accessible from the pavement. The apples ripened and, as they were not harvested, began falling to the ground to rot. Perturbed by the wastefulness of the situation and concerned for the potential outbreak of pests such as fruit fly, I asked the residents for permission to harvest the tree. The residents were long time renters, students at a nearby university. They had little value or care about the fruit so were happy to see it go.

On the day of the harvest, I set about picking the fruit using a long handled instrument to avoid ladders. Not long into the process, a car sat idle parked outside the residence watching the harvest take place. After five minutes a man in his 60s emerged from the car and asked me, in a thick accent with Aussie twangs every so often, what I was doing harvesting his fruit tree. I explained to him that I was concerned that this fruit was being left to go to waste on the footpath and I had asked the residents of the house if I could harvest it.

He was upset by this as it turned out he was the owner of the house and thus this fruit tree. He didn’t like that I was harvesting his fruit tree, despite him not having any intention of harvesting it himself. He believed it was his right to let the tree do whatever it did, and that he did not have to worry about any fruiting matter, or the unrealised potential of sharing the produce.

When I explained that the fruit would be donated to the local primary school he seemed more relieved than before. Perhaps he thought I was going to sell it at the local greengrocer. He asked me to finish up and not harvest his fruit trees again. He then left.

As I was finishing up my work a neighbour approached me and explained that the house actually belonged to the man’s parents who had passed on. He now benefited from the inheritance by renting the property out. The neighbour seemed irritated that the new owner of the house had taken very little care of his property and complained about the apples rotting on the ground.

If only fruit could talk.
1.9 Conclusion

The popularity surrounding the sharing economy is born out of our deep desire to connect with others, take care of our environment and engage in a gentler form of capitalism.

Operationally, the sharing economy deploys new technologies to create efficient business models, which in turn open up market niches, but it doesn’t address who we are, and who we seek to become. The sharing economy, with its successes and critiques, sets the scene for this practice, against a backdrop of consumeristic lifestyles and a turbulent political environment in Australia. This practice emerges at a time when grassroots activity is ripe to flourish.

This practice began by exploring my local streets, as a way of getting to know a new neighbourhood. As part of this urban exploration, I decided to document where edible plants are being grown on or over public land, a process inspired by an artists’ collective in LA, Fallen Fruit. I called it The Foraging Commons.

What began as a simple local project grew quickly to a national scale. The attention, particularly from the media, was unexpected, and in the short-term, unhelpful. I hadn’t considered that this simple project with good intentions could be disruptive to others. My naivety forced me into a situation of public scrutiny that I would otherwise have not sought out, tested my resolve, and perhaps more fundamentally my identity.

The media coverage generated a public outburst, which in retrospect was a storm in a teacup. However, it created the beginning of a reflective process, and opened a new practice space for me to explore.

Why did people have a problem sharing fruit, where it would otherwise be wasted? Or where it was grown on or over public land? What did this reveal about our human condition, and the broader sustainability challenges being faced by society?
Some feared others intentions, and missing out on their ‘fair share’ – the fruits of their labour. For some, community gardening was perhaps more an extension of the private backyard than a place to share. These notions of private property and ownership needed to be challenged.

Reclaim the Curb and Sharing Abundance are two projects designed to explore and challenge ideas of ownership, and to blur the boundaries between private and public. They are vehicles for collaboration and cooperation, mutual exchange of value and a repurposing of waste.

The outcomes sought are neatly defined as sharing, but the processes seek to erode and reveal deeper human layers of the human condition – covered over by recent decades of private wealth accumulation, I had hoped to find more stable, social footings to affirm my own sense of self and perhaps instil new faith in those around me.

In this process, I had discovered that with gentle persuasion and practice, the arts of giving and receiving were alive, albeit faint. I was encouraged.

Prior to commencing this body of work I was involved in The Clothing Exchange, a project designed to reactivate clothing through swapping events. This model of bringing people together, making an activity fun and social, while quietly presenting an environmental agenda was the backbone for my design approach to these projects.

As a reflective practice, the methodology I have engaged with is highly iterative, enabling me to weave the feedback from explorative projects, into the design of the next. The result has been a collection of projects that offers both an insight and a mirror reflection of Australian culture, and the social constraints to a more sustainable food system in Australia.

If the sharing economy isn’t leading the revolution from the ground up, who can we turn to?
2.1 Introduction

The projects I am drawn to have many similarities. Ideologically, the projects are embedded within the sustainability movement, as they inherently address some of the wasteful shortfalls of our consumer lifestyles, and in doing this, they have a flavour of activism.

This is not the type of activism associated with popular culture. There are no picket lines or signs being made. Rather the projects are offering an alternative to mainstream wasteful tendencies, associated with the dominant capitalist paradigm. It is this difference that is most important, as these projects make space to create and nurture alternative ways of being and doing.

I do this using design intelligence to deduce core project elements, create experiences, and to design new service models.

Operationally, the projects are lean with limited overheads, and there are low barriers to market. These characteristics are fundamental to the projects, as they allow for ideas and hypotheses to be tested in real life situations, quickly and with low budget. This rapid prototyping of socially based innovation inadvertently nurtures failure, which is fundamental to accept as part of improving and learning from experience.

In his book Creative Cities (2015), Marcus Westbury, the founder of Renew Newcastle, reflects upon the process of creating urban spaces that nurtures creative expression. He asserts that the less people are able to actively shape their communities through their actions, the more alienated they become to both others in that space, and the physical space itself.
Westbury (2015) goes on to trace how, through professionalism, communities have lost the ability to work together. To address this, Westbury has actively created spaces to nurture creativity collaboratively, and to allow freedom for people to fail. He believes being able to fail, and fail cheaply, allows for innovation, creativity and resilience to be built up both in the individual and also in a broader cohort of innovators and community actors.

At the heart of the discussion in this chapter is the power of people coming together, connecting together through a shared experience such as building a garden, or connecting because they are involved in overlapping projects. Through developing my own projects, I have come to understand that the social power of activities created was a major contributor to their appeal for participants and potential for success.

As the practice evolved, I have come to realise that it is from these social interactions, both within my own project and with people from other projects, where I learnt most about my practice.

This chapter explores the three significant ideological themes that surround this practice. These three topic areas are: Sustainability, Activism, and Urban Agriculture. When mapped spatially, as demonstrated in the diagram below, these three topic areas overlap both between themselves and into the middle. It is this nexus at the centre where my practice is located.

See diagram overleaf.

Figure 1: Knowledge areas of my practice: Sustainability, Activism, Urban Agriculture

Commencing with a discussion on sustainability, followed by activism and urban agriculture, this chapter unpacks how each of these knowledge areas ideologically impacts my practice, and how my practice contributes to each of these knowledge areas. The discussion also reviews the broader community of practice within Australia, with a particular focus on Melbourne and Victorian practices.
Figure 1: Knowledge areas of my practice: Sustainability, Activism, Urban Agriculture
2.2 Sustainability

This section begins by framing the discussion with a review of the historical context of the sustainability movement, having been born out of environmentalism, but softened to encompass a broader, diluted, perhaps unrealistic ideal – sustainable development. A critical discussion of sustainability follows, drawing out and challenging dominant themes emerging from current literature. Manifestations of the sustainability movement in everyday life are then presented, supported by a series of case studies. This section concludes with a discussion of how my practice contributes to the sustainability movement, and addresses some of its shortcomings.

2.2.1 From Environmentalism to Sustainability

Many historians point to the release of Rachel Carson’s Silent Spring (1962) as a landmark moment in the modern environmental movement. However, concerns of environmental well being can be traced further back to the world’s first private environmental group, founded in Britain in 1865 – The Commons, Footpaths and Open Spaces Preservation Society.

Today there are over 15,000 such groups with only a third of them founded after 1972 (McCormick, 1989). This indicates a long held interest in preserving the natural environment first cultivated by conservationists, and a willingness and ability to campaign for environmental protection.

It also highlights that at the time of the industrial revolution there was effectively a split in the human psyche. No longer were we simply a part of nature, as agricultural animals: we became industrialists with the potential to destroy nature. Because we can now destroy it, we have to deliberately conserve it.

The 1960s and 1970s saw an unprecedented growth in public environmental awareness and concern globally, with notable events such as the world’s first Earth Day being held in 1969 and the United Nations creating a new environmental program in 1972, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Further to this, two foundational environmental texts
were published, *The Limits to Growth* (1972) and *The Population Bomb* (1968), which increasingly contributing to theoretical frameworks being generated around the environmental movement. These texts, including *Silent Spring* (1962), offer an insight into the environmental movement at this time with key issues identified and campaigned on, including:

- Human (industrial) activity was dramatically damaging the Earth’s ecosystems.
- Natural resources were being rapidly depleted.
- There were limits to the Earth’s carrying capacity, that would in turn limit future economic development, and ultimately human well being.
- To protect the natural environment, approaches at extreme odds with the status quo were often campaigned for, which alienated the majority (Example: Birth rate measure by Ehrlich, 1968).
- Concurrently with this alienated majority, collective action was promoted.
- Technology was viewed as a promising alternative, particularly around eco-efficiency and the prospect of having our cake while eating it too.

By 1980, most of the major international organisations had taken policy positions on the environment including the World Bank, the European Community and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (McCormick, 1989).

However, the question of how to continue to develop economically, while adopting environmentally sustainable practices, still lingered through environmental lobby groups. In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development brought the notion of sustainable development into the public debate more broadly.
The resulting publication, *Our Common Future* (The Brundtland Report, 1992), defined the pursuit of environmental sustainability as ‘meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’, which in turn defined the task of the broader movement to find a balance between economic activity and the environment.

This request for balance broadened the movement from being single issue focused (the environment) to a more broadly unified approach including social and economic challenges. Business literature would soon co-opt this approach through coining the popular triple bottom line reporting system – people, planet and profit, with the corporate mantra of ‘you can’t manage what you don’t measure’.

Building upon this, the first multi-faceted approach to sustainable development at a global level can be most clearly identified in the *Agenda 21 Report from the UN Conference on Environment and Development*, also known as the Rio Summit (1992). As the Report stated, ‘Humanity stands at a defining moment in history. We are confronted with a perpetuation of disparities between and within nations, a worsening of poverty, hunger, ill health and illiteracy and the continuing deterioration of the ecosystems on which we depend for our wellbeing’ (Rio Summit, 1992).

Since the Rio Summit, nations have initiated their own agendas for alternative sustainable development. The maligned Kyoto Protocol on climate change represents the complexity, and ultimately inability, of the global community to negotiate, set and deliver meaningful goals for reducing carbon emissions.

The recent Paris Climate Conference bucked the trend somewhat by producing a binding agreement that will come into effect in 2020 and which requires all countries to address climate change by reducing emissions to stabilise global warming at ‘well below’ two degrees above pre-industrial levels. The perceived big win of the Paris agreement, is that it managed to get all countries to agree to a common goal, rather than just developed or just developing nations.
However, the devil in the detail remains with carbon accounting practices called into the question, and practical steps required by big polluters such as Australia to reduce emissions yet to be defined. There are also uncertain legal and economic repercussions for individual countries not reducing emissions, once the agreement is in effect.

On the domestic front, current Prime Minister Turnbull who presented on the first day of the Paris Climate Conference is battling the ‘climate hang over from Abbott and a group of climate deniers’. The environment editor for Fairfax commented on Turnbull’s speech at Paris:

> It was strange to see a political leader who understands the climate change dilemma so well – remember, this is a man who gave notes to Ross Garnaut as he prepared his landmark global warming reviews – unable to give a full throated account of it on the world stage because of a small rump of climate sceptics back home (Arup, 2015).

Over decades, the policy response to these challenges can be characterised as ‘technical’ and bureaucratic in nature, with an emphasis on pricing pollution through taxation or market mechanisms to drive industry innovation, use of regulatory controls to shift worst practice, and awareness campaigns to shift values and behaviour. For the individual, these top-down levers of systemic change can often result in disempowerment (I feel helpless because the problem is so big), or at worst apathy (I don’t care what I do, because it won’t make a difference anyway), particularly when those pulling the levers have been ineffective.

The unwillingness, or simply the inability, of governments to develop and commit to a unified strategy (including Australia) is dividing the government’s acknowledgement of, and response to, the threat of climate change. Inaction also highlights the growing distance between governments and many of the people they represent (Singer, 2004).
The ambition of the individual is running ahead of the system, causing a disconnect and dissonance between them. It is not surprising then that activism is an avenue some people are engaging with to bring about change. Perhaps most importantly, the dissonance highlights that collectively, we haven’t been able to mend the fundamental rift in human psyche, from pre-industrial humanity that lived comfortably with nature in co-dependence, and post-industrial humanity that exploits nature for material gain (Hamilton 2009).

2.2.2 Understanding the Sustainability Movement

The sustainability movement has moved away from just a deep concern with the natural environment to a more inclusive movement incorporating social, economic and cultural factors.

As a result of this broadening, the modern sustainability movement has been criticised for lacking any clear vision for a sustainable future. Shellenberger and Nordhaus in their popular paper *The Death of Environmentalism* (2004), made two important criticisms of the modern sustainability movement. First, due to the lack of any bold vision in the future, the movement has morphed into ‘just another special interest’ group (p.8); and second, it lacks the ability to capture ‘the popular inspiration nor the political alliances the community needs to deal with the problem’ (p.7).

The following five key themes of the modern sustainability movement are summarised here, and discussed in more detail below:

- We can buy our way to a sustainable future, we just need to buy the right products;
- Technology will save us, eventually;
- Belief in free market forces to balance the environmental ledger, or self-regulate;
- Lack of connection to, and understanding of, the limits of ecological capacity;
- The aesthetic preference often turns into a moral imperative resulting in ‘green smug’
In Tom Crompton’s *Weathercocks and Signposts* (2008), the idea that environmentalism has been its own worst enemy is built upon by squarely pointing the finger of blame:

‘environmentalists’ urgent efforts to change people’s behavior ... have often reinforced dominant consumerist values’ (Crompton, 2008).

The aesthetic discourse of the modern sustainability movement seems to be both its success and its failure. The overall image of the movement is solidified in our minds – the single speed bicycles, the Japanese pared back interior feel, the androgynous fashion, the vegetable inks on post-consumer paper magazines, the sourdough made from locally sourced culture, the partnership in a microbrewery, the smart phone app that reminds the user of their energy consumption ... the list goes on.

It is this quintessential look and feel that has broadened the appeal of the movement, but has also weakened it through coupling it with the compromises made by implicitly endorsing consumptive behaviour and values. The line has been blurred between pro-environmental consumer choices, and those choices made for green, aesthetic smug.

Whether it be the justification for a second car (but it’s a Prius), study trips to Germany (but I’m participating in a sustainable energy conference), the convenience of plastic packaged food (but they are organic, and the package is biodegradable) – these all contribute to the increasing number of compromises made by the modern sustainability movement. This in turn grows an increasing disquiet that the movement is lacking credibility.

The modern sustainability movement seems to have very little to do with the natural environment, but rather it contributes to the growing space between humans and the natural world. The ‘buy in’ nature of this movement, so stylistically outlined in the aesthetic components that contribute to its overall image, reinforces the idea of the consumerist values underpinning it, further manifesting a tension between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots’.

The modern sustainability movement is seen as very much a luxury of the middle class, buying their way to a more sustainable future.
Building upon the consumer overtures of the modern sustainability movement, common arguments are made when resisting individual, pro-environmental behaviours. The steadfast beliefs that both technology and/or free markets will solve environmental problems in the long run, pins hope on bigger system forces and create an excuse for short term inaction.

The longstanding rebuttal to faith in technology and markets can be traced back to a cornerstone publication of the environmentalist movement, *The Limits to Growth* (1972), and more recent publications such as Tim Jackson’s *Prosperity Without Growth* (2009) and updates to *The Limits to Growth* (Turner et al, 2012). All highlight the fundamental tension between economic growth, and environmental and social well being, that only a ‘letting go’ of economic growth can resolve. Turner (2012) makes a compelling case that the original limits to growth theorem is playing out before our eyes, with the forces of population and economic growth drowning out the resistance of eco-efficiency, with humanity on the cusp of a dramatic, socio-economic ‘correction’ back to livelihoods constrained by ecological realities.

Arguably the most important tension developing in the modern sustainability movement is the lack of altruistic values that dominate the environmental movement. Protecting the natural environment has always seen to be mutually beneficial for individuals and social groups as demonstrated in anthropological and modern political history by predominantly bipartisan governmental support. With the movement now associated with a dominant aesthetic comes the risk of this preference turning into a moral imperative and the movement having to deal with the consequential ‘green smug’.

The movement risks this preference turning into a moral imperative and dealing with the consequential ‘green smug’.
2.2.3 Sustainability and My Practice

The underlying objective of this practice is to promote pro-environmental lifestyles and behaviours. Sustainability is both the motivator and the desired outcome of this body of work, the beginning and the end.

I have learnt during the design phase of each project, and through previous projects I have been involved in, that even though the project itself may have been created to promote pro-environmental behaviour, the actual project needs to be more appealing than ‘saving the planet’. This may seem a strange suggestion since even though efforts towards saving the planet seem fundamental, any action by the very people causing it is not deemed imperative if the effects of climate change are not directly affecting them.

Furthermore, I find people are bored with the idea of environmentalism – being socially subversive within an environmental agenda can be a useful way of accessing a broader audience.

The projects in my practice offer an opportunity to socialise; to acquire fresh fruit; to exercise; to develop skills; to build a living garden as well as providing a chance to explore an urban landscape with the romantic notions of a treasure hunt. The participants are aware of the environmental benefits their actions have, but it is not the primary motivation for being involved.

The environmental movement has been criticised for alienating their cause by continuously telling ‘others’ to ‘do better’, and by conceding to consumerist motivations. By considering broader social goals of human connection, the desire for novelty, and the satisfaction of a simple task completed with others, I was able to take a pro-environmental behaviour and make it more interesting than separating the paper from the plastics.

Despite its best intentions, this body of work could be criticised for being too marginal, elitist and not actually bringing about enough grassroots change.
Wagner, in his article for *The New York Times* titled ‘Going Green and Getting Nowhere’ (2011), addressed this criticism of individual action. In this opinion piece, he states that individual action is not enough. To make the change that is needed on such a global scale, only policy reform is capable. But after 40 years of waiting, individuals have grown restless.

This body of work is not a final solution, rather an exploration and demonstration of sustainability and activist projects which utilise urban agriculture, informed by design thinking. The projects were recorded through online blogs and photography and promoted via the media. During the execution of these projects, how to guides or manuals were created so that others could copy this work, take it to their own lives and communities, and make adaptations should they be needed.

Subtly weaving sustainability into the project, instead of making it ‘the main event’, has allowed for the projects to reach an audience beyond the ‘special interest groups’ usually drawn to pro-environmental projects, leading to projects gaining coverage in media outlets, due to the broad appeal. By repositioning the sustainability element within the projects, and not losing it or dismissing it, I have created a new space rich with intention and possibility, offering broad benefits to participants and momentum to create new futures.
2.3 Activism

This section commences with a review of the history of activism, to trace the different manifestations of change making strategies over time. The discussion then focuses on food activism, reflecting the focus of projects profiled in this body of work being on food. Following on from this, a case study of the Daylesford Community Food Garden is presented to illustrate how different their approach is to collaboration, in contrast to the volunteers at the community garden in Kirribilli, Sydney, and their response to the Foraging Commons project. To conclude this section, a reflection piece is included on my practice.

2.3.1 Activism: where has it come from?

Relaying the history of activism is like attempting to relay the history of human life on this planet. Tim Jordan, in his book Activism! (2002), succinctly describes the breadth of activism as early as the nineteenth century as follows:

"Political conflict at nearly all levels accompanied the emergence of industrial societies in the nineteenth century. International conflict occurred both in wars between sovereign states and in imperialist projects for subjugating other states. Cultural conflicts occurred over developments in representation, in communication media and over the definition of national cultures. Economic, social and other conflicts all intermingled as social structures were overturned and remade" (Jordon 2002).

Social change methods and nonviolent social interventions were a focus of much philosophical thought during the nineteenth century, which continued through the twentieth century and through to today. The definitive work by Thoreau, Civil Disobedience (1849), was published after his own civil disobedience act of refusing to pay taxes in protest over the Mexican–American War. Other significant contributions include a theory of nonviolent movements from Tolstoy and a theory of nonviolent action from Ghandi.

The familiar social movements of the twentieth century, including feminism, anti-racism and the economical movement, are firmly etched into our collective memory of what revolution looks like. Images of Martin Luther King or the Suffragettes hark back to a time when the people had power, protesting meant something and ‘good’ would prosper over ‘evil’.
Nonviolent social movements have become a popular way for citizens to petition their views to governments and other large organisations. However, as time has passed and frustrations have grown, the good versus evil notion has become increasingly blurred. This is best demonstrated in the ‘Battle of Seattle’, a landmark protest from various activist groups against the meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1999.

The protest is considered a success due to the Multilateral Agreement on Investment not being signed at this WTO gathering. Protesters unlawfully arrested were freed without any criminal persecution and the overall campaign to draw public attention to anti-globalisation issues via the media has had a lasting legacy.

However, the narrative around protesting was changed forever after this event as what was ‘good’ and what was ‘bad’ seemed more grey than ever. While police were recorded using overly aggressive force to detain protestors, and unlawful arrests were made in violation the Fourth Amendment of the American Constitution, acts of senseless vandalism on private property and loss of sales were attributed to the antichrists amongst the protestors, turning what was meant to be a peaceful process into a violent display.

The spectator in this situation was left at a loss to know whether or not protesting was the best course of action when such devastation was left in the wake of the event. The WTO continued to meet and sign a range of agreements that were not mutually beneficial, and a ‘no protest zone’ was enforced around each of the meeting locations to avoid a repeat performance.

So yes it may have worked once, but will it continue working or in fact work ever again? Is this type of protesting, dare I say, sustainable? And, most importantly, does it bring about the systematic change that is so desired?

For every activist cheering on the sideline, there is a conservative shaking their head bemoaning ‘kids these days’.

In 2011, Time magazine named its person of the year ‘The Protester‘ to credit the hordes of anonymous activists who were part of the global Occupy Movement. It was an interesting turn of events as ‘the children of the revolution’ had their turn to define what activism
looks like in this new century. Facilitated largely by social media, with its purposely-flat structure, this leaderless, unified message-less movement infuriated the very people who rebelled by being ‘boxed in’.

This younger generation, my generation, was previously criticised for being too politically passive. ‘Click-tivism’ or activism via clicking on the facebook like button, or on a Get Up petition was, for a long time, the only meaningful contribution we had made to collectively changing the world – and we could do it all without leaving our computer screens. But with the advent of the Occupy Movement, we were criticised for not being overt enough about the parameters of the protest, and without a leader to blame!

Harcourt, in his essay on “The Occupy Movement” (2013), identifies the criticism the Occupy Movement has received around lack of leadership, and relates this to the current democratic structure. Harcourt explains, ‘the genius of democratic structures of governance is that they provide no target anymore. There is no monarch, no tyrant, no dictator’ (p.69). Harcourt goes on to say ‘we the people have so diluted accountability and attribution that we are left unable to find a target to engage politically. We have become the tyrants’ (p.69).

This irony suggests that the protest, democratic leader and critic are one and the same, so caught up in their own irrelevant bubble that they too have missed the opportunity to create meaningful change.

This then begs two questions: What is the best form of protest? What does democratic leadership look like?

This practice proposes that the most effective form of protest is to create and embed new ways of living within the old, to subvert the system before it has a chance to suppress change.

Through the campaigns, this body of work emphasises the practice of everyday life to bring about systemic change.
I first came across the Occupy Movement via a newsfeed from Adbusters, an activist group located in Canada that campaigns against the hyper consumerist culture, including holding the global ‘buy nothing day’ and ‘unplug week’. This type of anti-consumerist ideal was a counterculture I was already part of, stemming from my environmental concern and my involvement with The Clothing Exchange. However, what was most interesting to me was the media embargo placed on covering the Occupy Movement by the City of New York. All of a sudden a protest against the economic model underpinning this capitalist world was very interesting and the media was involved as well – what didn’t they want me to see?

Since the Occupy Movement, the disgruntled beast of change, has reared its head in many different forms, striving to make positive change. This includes the increasing popularity and awareness of self-organising communities taking control of their food and energy systems, cornerstone pieces of our modern world, to address and demonstrate how sustainability (often referred to as the third revolution) can be integrated with positive outcomes for all.

An inclusive movement, more than a divisive one.

### 2.3.2 Food Activism

Food has a long activism-entwined history. Not only is food the basis for nurturing and growing human life, it is also the basis for the growth of private corporations as they gain majority ownership over seed, land and distribution of our food. This creates a dynamic worthy of activism. The story is common across geographical boundaries and often repeated throughout history.

From the fifteenth century English enclosure to the colonisation of India, the rights to access land were restricted to those who could afford to own it, under the notion of ‘private property’. Those who could not afford to own land sold their labour to gain access to growing spaces and produce. This process of land privatisation created the foundations of economic exploitation and so revolution, with profound social repercussions.
Private property rights and the emergence of industrial scale technology is the point where the rift in human psyche, between living with nature, and having to exploit it to survive, begins.

Raj Patel, through his book *Stuffed and Starved* (2009) explores the tensions manifested in the modern food system. On the issue of land access ramifications, Patel explains:

> For the landless, options were few. Peeled from traditional access to the land, many of the ‘free’ landless poor made their way to the cities to seek work. Those who remained on the land worked for a wage and only after-hours worked to feed themselves. On the other hand, for those who owned land, the shift from feudal to capitalist economics generated vast efficiencies, profits and hence the means to fund a growing national appetite to buy foreign food (Patel, 2009, p. 76).

Despite the obvious success of the enclosure of the commons, that is the continual privatisation of public assets including land, resources and infrastructure, there have been many activist attempts to ‘right the wrong’. The Diggers seizing public land in seventeenth century England is one of the more common examples of the uprisings in which ‘radicals’ aimed to grow food to give away to the poor.

A more recent example, which is quite pertinent due to its timing and vision, was the group calling itself the Robin Hood Commission that founded the People’s Park on April 20th 1969. Seizing a vacant lot owned by the University of California, the People’s Park was to be a model site for a new cooperative society built from the ground up that, auspiciously, included growing their own ‘uncontaminated’ food. The food would be ‘organic’, ‘a word that at the time brimmed with meanings that went far beyond any particular agricultural method’ (Pollan, 2007, p. 141). Historian Warren J. Belasco cites the events in People’s Park as marking the beginning of the ‘greening’ of the counter culture, making way for the commune movement in the countryside, food co-ops, ‘guerilla capitalism’ and, crucially, organic agriculture (Belasco, 1988).

Fast forward to the present day, and we find ourselves (again) in the midst of an urban agriculture revolution with cities across the world engaging with the idea of growing your own food and transforming concrete landscapes into growing environments. Green rooves
and walls, community gardens, urban orchards, food forests and edible pathways and cycle ways are all manifestations of urban agriculture which have now become commonplace in the global city.

Spurred on through the ongoing conversation around climate change and to enable food security, the urban agricultural movement has a growing desire (and need) to co-locate food and people in order to minimise carbon emissions caused by both the growing and transportation of food. The movement became solidified in the mainstream consciousness during the Global Financial Crisis in 2009 when parallels were being drawn between the stock market crash of that year and the Great Depression. It was during this time that the idea of frugal living and self-sufficiency, inspired by the formation of Victory Gardens during World War 2, was again revisited.

Urban agriculture has been defined as:

... growing fruits, herbs, and vegetables and raising animals in cities, a process that is accompanied by many other complementary activities such as processing and distributing food, collecting and reusing food waste and rainwater, and educating, organizing, and employing local residents (Cohen, 2012, p.13).

It is these ‘complementary activities’ that are broadening the appeal of urban agriculture beyond just growing food.

Design Trust for Public Space, in partnership with Added Value, undertook a study on urban agriculture in New York City, and noted that ‘growing food is often one among many urban agricultural activities directed toward community development goals’ (Cohen, 2012, p.5). Activities can include education programs for students, outreach programs for migrants, nutrition and cooking classes as part of community development programs, leadership training and environmental conservation.
Due to the breadth of activities urban agriculture enables, the value of urban agriculture is difficult to measure. Interestingly most studies into urban agriculture focus more on the qualitative, human side rather than food production. This focus leads to the assumption that, despite its intention, urban agriculture is more about community capacity building rather than addressing food security.

Urban agriculture, with its current manifestations, may not be the answer to food security for cities; however, it does offer a broad appeal and a wide range of activities to engage a diverse audience in sustainability related actions. Jason Mark, in his ‘Gastronomica’ essay states:

... spend a few months taking a broccoli from seed to harvest, and you’ll soon have a much deeper appreciation for the natural systems on which we depend. Our connection to the earth becomes gobsmackingly obvious when you watch the crops grow (or fail). The garden produces a harvest of teachable moments about what it means to live in an environment (Mark, 2013).

More people than ever before now live in cities. My city based friends joke they can’t remember the last time they didn’t have concrete under their feet. In this moment in time interactions with the environment are becoming more and more vital to understanding our place in the greater scheme of things and, more critically, to contextualising the value of environmentally friendly behaviour. The industrial revolution has caused a psychological rift in which we are detached from our co-existence with nature. Could urban agriculture heal the rift?

Interestingly, Mark (2013) identifies that gardens grow good citizens. They teach people cooperation, teamwork, new skills, seasonal flows, ecological cycles, waste management and the value of food, to name just a few. Whether it be a publicly funded community garden or regular folks gardening in their backyard, it is worth cultivating the satisfaction gained from this type of engagement and the positive civic behaviour it encourages.
2.3.3 Case Study: Daylesford Community Garden

In March 2011, five months after the media storm in a teacup over The Foraging Commons, a group of people located in Daylesford, Central Victoria, planned, coordinated and established a community garden on a vacant piece of crown land in the town’s centre earmarked for development.

Patrick Jones, a founding member of this garden, says the plan was to

‘grow community food, build a community good garden using permaculture principles and dismantle the private property model for food production’ (Jones, 2014)

Inspired to act ‘before the unravelling turns to panic’, and to avoid the bureaucratic nature of local governance, permission was not sought. Over three days the garden was established, an opening party was held, and host Costa Georgiadis officially opened the site. Following these activities, Patrick chose not to wait for the council to approach him about his action. Rather, he approached the council to suggest how it should respond to the community garden. To the group’s surprise, the council agreed, and the councillors began to champion this project. Within nine months of the first garden’s establishment, council allocated a further two sites for community garden food production on crown land in the town.

To the group’s surprise, the council agreed, and the councillors began to champion this project. Within nine months of the first garden’s establishment, council allocated a further two sites for community garden food production on crown land in the town. Three years on Daylesford has five community garden plots, all designed with permaculture guidelines and operated on the simple principle of take and give. There are no committees, no operational rules, no bureaucracy, and most importantly, no locks.

I met Patrick before the second community garden had been established. In the wake of my experience with the community garden in Sydney I couldn’t help but ask about acts of vandalism. The community garden in Sydney was so worried about ‘others’ becoming interested in their site, not following ‘the rules’, and taking all of their hard earned produce, that they had to lock the gates to their plot.

Patrick seemed amused by my question. It was clearly not the first time someone had asked him this, and over the coming years of watching Patrick present at conferences, lectures and
in the media, this question would be asked again and again. Initially he mused that this was a worry generated from the socially constructed capitalist system dominating our culture, and surely just a problem for the bourgeois class.

The truth was, the Daylesford community gardens didn’t experience any vandalism. Sure, people took produce but there was generally more than enough to go around, and never was everything taken. Some youths were seen urinating on the garden one evening, but the group collectively agreed this was probably good for the greater garden system. What I realised, and what Patrick was demonstrating through the gardens, is that when the community ‘owns’ the land, works together to maintain and create with that space, the way everyone responds to that space changes too.

Instead of populating spaces with metal signs that dictate rules, the space is left open, encouraging the use of a personal moral compass for navigation. It’s not a question of whether you are allowed to do something, but rather, should you do it?

**2.3.4 Ask for Forgiveness instead of Permission**

When designing the parameters for each of my projects, at different times I played with different rules. At the beginning with the Foraging Commons, there were guidelines for user engagement. After the substantial criticism generated from that project, a set of guidelines was developed that the user needed to agree to before accessing the maps.

Although the rules satisfied the desire for parameters around the project, there was no consequence for people who violated them. I found I would spend more and more time being questioned over the wording of a particular ‘rule’. This type of governance/administrative role was not what I was hoping to be doing as a major part of my practice.

For the subsequent projects, I relied more heavily on a simple structure that allowed for a moral compass to emerge. Sharing Abundance operated on an equitable sharing of the produce harvested. This project has always been the least controversial of the projects as the guidelines are clear, easy to follow, and everyone gets a share. Interestingly, it was this project that I also found the least rewarding as an activist.
Following from Sharing Abundance, Reclaim the Curb operated on the premise of asking for forgiveness instead of permission. This allowed bottom up, grassroots action to come to life, without being bombarded and dismissed by bureaucratic legislation. It energised the communities because it gave them the opportunity to do something instead of just talking about it. Should the action or, in this case establishing a shared vegetable patch, cause concern for someone, the project is easily adapted. At the end of the day, it’s just a bunch of plants in the ground.

This process empowers the group wanting to do something by giving them permission to break a few rules, demonstrate their idea and potentially fail – failure becomes ok. And it avoids the easy option for authorities to say ‘no’, particularly at a time when councils are over regulated and commonsense is undervalued.

By trialling alternate sets of rules and levels of control within the different projects, I noticed contrasting types of people were drawn to the projects. This in turn not only benefited the overall reach of the body of work, but also the variations in my personal response to the projects. Upon reflection I have found the over subscription to rules on The Foraging Commons was a knee jerk reaction to the criticism the project generated. I have found the rules repressive, and it makes me worried I’m doing something wrong. On the other hand, I have found my involvement in Reclaim the curb continuously more liberating and creative. I feel that the motivation this created passed on to the rest of the project and the participants. I have no doubt these feelings were passed on through my motivation to the rest of the project and the participants.

The iterative process used to develop the rules, and the process used to reduce dependence on the rules, liberates the moral compass. This is an example of the design thinking process I engaged in when developing this body of work. The role of design and design thinking has allowed for these projects to develop into a cohesive body of work that acts like a campaign for pro-environmental behaviour and collaborative lifestyles.
2.4 Urban Agriculture

This section commences with an overview of the historical context of urban agriculture from a design perspective. Following this, the discussion critiques the manifestations of urban agriculture today in light of its current popularity. This section concludes with the contribution my practice makes to this movement.

2.4.1 The Design of Urban Agriculture

Historically human settlement and food availability have gone hand in hand. However, the rise of industrialisation, cheap transport, food preservation technology and the growth of agribusiness have allowed food production to be moved to a place largely unseen by city dwellers. As a result, food production has largely been absent from western cities for several decades and, conversely, ‘forms and patterns of built settlements no longer reflect their food supply systems’ (Gorgolewski et al, 2011, pp. 12)

Architects and designers have long questioned the role of food supply in modern urbanism. An outstanding example in the planning movement is Ebenezer Howard’s Garden City theory, which demonstrates this exploration by allocating five-sixths of land for food production. Through his book, Garden Cities of To-Morrow (1902), Howard’s designs explore in detail the intricate and complementary relationships between agriculture and a bustling city.

Building upon these relationships, Patrick Geddes, an influential urban theorist of the early twentieth century, introduced the concept of transect. Geddes proposed to preserve a section through a region that is dedicated to producing food within proximity to a city centre (Geddes, 1915). The Regional Planning Association of America adopted Geddes ideas through urban planning proposals during the period between world wars when the centrality of agriculture was of intense interest (Gorgolewski et al, 2011).
Frank Lloyd Wright’s Broadacre City proposes an alternative vision to Howard and Geddes in which agriculture is dispersed with low density living. Wright explores how families would be settled on one acre of land (his estimate of the space a family would need to obtain self-sufficiency) and could connect to a decentralised city by car and flying machine (Gorgolewski et al, 2011).

Le Corbusier also contributed his ideas of how a city should be designed through his 1922 Contemporary City proposal. Here he proposed three different types of food producing areas:

1. Protected zones for large scale agriculture.
2. Detached suburban homes with large kitchen gardens.
3. Ten acre groups of allotments for apartment dwellers to cultivate on (Le Corbusier, 1987).

Famously, during World War 2, much urban space in developed countries came under agricultural production with the encouragement of governments. Slogans such as Dig for Victory encouraged everyone to get involved in the war effort through food production. It has been reported that 40 per cent of food was produced from urban allotments during this time (Gorgolewski et al, 2011).

The much cited example of Havana, Cuba where a significant amount of food is produced, reinforces the claim that urban food production is both a viable and sustainable alternative to modern commercial food systems. The legacy from these Victory Gardens is not only a discussion on the amount of food produced, but more so of the need for food production to be systemised in order to achieve predictable and steady supplies.

The concept of food production co-locating where people are, to achieve security and longevity, quickly evaporated after World War 2 as commercial industry, cheap fuel, and advancements in packaging and food preservation, became standardised in western
countries. Consequently, much of the design and planning of western cities ceased to include spaces for food production. Orientated towards global markets, agricultural development and policy disconnected itself from urban policy and design (Steel, 2008).

Australia has broadly followed the same journey in terms of urban food production as the rest of the developed world. Prior to World War 2, ‘production’ or ‘utility’ dominated backyard use. This then evolved in the post-war era to involve ‘recreation’ and ‘display’ gardens. Andrea Gaynor’s *Harvest of the Suburbs* (2006) offers a thorough historical account of urban food production in Australia. Gaynor (2006) notes that economic motivations are a significant driver for some households to grow their own food and that these motivations which seemed heightened during prior to World War 2. However, she found many households continue to produce food (on average, two in every three suburban homes), but they do so due to an array of complex motivators.

The most significant motivator Gaynor (2006) found is the Australian belief that the home is a castle, and this castle needs to demonstrate ‘an individualist disposition which eschews reliance on others and values the ability to stand on one’s own two feet’. Food production in suburban Australia is but one symbol of independence, complemented by the preference for private, detached housing and personal transport (instead of mass transit), often all rolled up into an idyllic image referred to as the Australian Dream.

**2.4.2 Urban Agriculture Revolution**

Urban agriculture is currently experiencing a resurgence of interest. The ongoing conversation around climate change is interacting with the desire (and need) to co-locate food and people so that growing and transportation emissions are avoided, thus enabling food security. The modern reincarnation of urban agriculture became solidified in the mainstream consciousness during the Global Financial Crisis in 2009 when parallels were being drawn between the stock market crash then and during the Great Depression. During this time, inspiration was adopted from the notion of victory gardens during World War 2, the success of urban agriculture in Havana, Cuba, and celebrated in the idea of frugal living
and self-sufficiency. Further to this, as some fundamental questions are being asked of the dominant capitalist paradigm that ultimately led to the financial crisis, the quest for independence is being addressed with vigour.

Kim Humphrey (2009), through his study of supermarkets and culture of consumption in Australia, identified that acts of consumption are associated with values of self-determination and individual freedom. In this study, despite much academic musing to the contrary, consumption or a ‘commodity culture’, has not entirely engulfed the lives of those in the post-industrial west. Humphrey explains that people ‘play’ with commodity culture and at times refuse it from certain spaces of their lives as a means of maintaining some sort of independence from ‘the system’. Urban food production, particularly in the Australian suburban backyard context, is one of these spaces. Gaynor (2006) speculates that suburban food production in Australia is an activity understood as ‘authentic’, as opposed to the ‘artifice and superficiality of commodity culture’.

However, as much as Australians may like to think they are independent from the system, we are still undeniably tied up to it. Only two supermarkets dominate the Australian food shopping. Globally, this trend of a few companies dominating whole markets continues, with transnational agricultural corporations controlling 40 per cent of world trade in food. Just 20 companies control the world coffee trade, six control 70 per cent of wheat trade, and one controls a staggering 98 per cent of packaged tea (Patel, 2009). It is not surprising then that food is such a significant frontier one which to try to reclaim independence, particularly as it’s so vital to our survival.

The separation of people and their food has been directly linked to the most pressing problems facing the world today, including climate change, obesity, pollution, security of the energy supply and global poverty. These concerns only intensify as the world’s population continues to grow (Patel, 2009).

Unfortunately within the sustainability movement, the ability of urban agriculture to physically ‘green’ man-made spaces has created a hope that this is the much awaited ‘cure-all’. The conversation quickly moves from backyard growing to cultivating public spaces, to
imagining a city-centric food production system utilising among other things green roofs, small scale aquaponics, urban orchards and community gardens.

Phrases such as ‘a model of a twenty-first century food system’, ‘enabling the eradication of food deserts’ and ‘equitable access to fresh healthy food’ are used to complement visions of what urban agriculture could be. They are hard to argue with. As Ben Hewitt puts it in his book, The Town that Food Saved (2010), ‘how can you hear someone talk about establishing a healthy food system and not nod in agreement? It’s the agricultural equivalent of saving baby seals’ (p.43).

As with many manifestations of the sustainability movement, the hype of urban agriculture ‘curing all ills and supplying a significant portion of their city’s calories is just that: hype’ (Johnson, 2014). The realities of urban agriculture, of limited space and limited to the people who have the time and money to engage in this form of hobby, are beginning to creep into the idealised image of urban dwellers achieving self-sufficiency and food security. Nathanael Johnson, in his article for Grist, ‘Urban farms won’t feed us, but they just might teach us’ (2014), argues that if projects address the space, time and money hurdles then urban agriculture may actually be effective in feeding a city as intended.

In cities, available land comes at a premium and although ‘a lot’ of food can be grown in a small space, the output amount of a garden is relative to the number of people that expect to have a share in it. Attempts to overcome the space at a premium argument include rooftop gardens, green walls and greening public spaces that are currently concrete. All these solutions come with their own sets of barriers, including access, vandalism, and opportunity cost, as well as the overall expense. On top of this is the time required to maintain a garden. The gloomy irony is that those people needing access to fresh good food are the same ones who have minimal leisure time. For most people, it makes economic sense to work at a job, get paid and purchase food rather than grow a few vegetables in the hope of saving some money. In addition, the incentives need to be bigger to gain the critical mass required to fulfil urban agriculture’s promised dream of a city being self-sufficient, or at least producing a substantial contribution for household consumption, harking back to the Victory Garden days.
The underlying factor in both arguments above is the lack of economic viability of small scale farming in cities. Some successful projects fulfil the promises of training underemployed or unemployed people. However, almost all projects seeking to optimise use of neglected spaces in cities through gardening rely on external funding for ongoing project viability. This type of non profit urban agriculture is common and tends to focus on the social impacts of the movement more so than the food, although food continues to be integral. A second type of urban agriculture is the high–end producers who are able to sell at a premium to top restaurants and high paying customers. These two working models are polarised in their offerings which further manifests the tensions of the urban agriculture movement and the broader sustainability scene.

There is a significant role for design within the urban agriculture realm. In the landmark book, Stuffed and Starved (2009), Raj Patel illustrates the global food system’s hourglass shape in which there are many producers at the top, many consumers at the bottom, and clinched in the middle is the stranglehold on distribution. Building upon this as a possible solution to the food system crisis we are experiencing at the moment is Marion Steel’s proposal of a lattice–like framework she discusses in her book Hungry City (2008). Steel illustrates a model in which there are many producers at the top and many consumers at the bottom. However, there is no one size fits all approach. Rather, there are many different models and options for getting food from a place of abundance to a place of need. It is this model in which I see the possibilities of urban agriculture and its popularity as meaningfully contributing to a sustainable food system and encouraging pro environmental behaviour in broader terms.

Further to this are the unmeasurable social impacts that urban agriculture can provide a community. Five Borough Farm report (2012) is the first of its kind to try to develop a framework for measuring the impacts of urban agriculture. It identifies that the activities involved in urban agriculture are largely beneficial for health, social and ecological indicators. The purpose of this framework was to help support organisations through grant and donor applications, and ultimately to inform policy development in town and city planning. However, there is something truly wonderful when an activity produces something unmeasurable like positive social impacts because it gives that activity agency and a place for hope.
Table 2: Understanding Urban Agriculture Activities across Melbourne

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Farms</th>
<th>Commercial Farms</th>
<th>Institutional Farms</th>
<th>Community Gardens</th>
<th>Grassroots Interventions</th>
<th>Online Applications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managed as a not for profit organisation. Includes demonstration gardens.</td>
<td>Managed as a for profit business.</td>
<td>Sites affiliated with institutions such as a school, housing development, prison.</td>
<td>Sites of council managed property, handed over to community groups that use the space to grow edible plants.</td>
<td>Groups set up to promote pro environmental behaviour and activate spaces with the cultivation of edible plants.</td>
<td>Apps that connect an audience with a desired outcome.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 2 | 1 | 5 | 299 | 4 | 3 |

- Collingwood Children's Farm
- CERES
- Cultivating Community
- The Lemon Tree Project
- 3000 acres
- Darebin Fruit Squad
- Reclaim the Curb
- Sharing Abundance
- Food Hubs
- Enterprises
- The Foraging Commons
2.4.3 Contribution to the Revolution

This body of work is far from alone in its contribution to urban agriculture within Australia. The activities captured under the urban agriculture umbrella are broad. To gain an understanding of this body of work’s contribution to this area I conducted a field study, or situation analysis, that records the activities.

To begin with, I wanted to gain an understanding of the broader contributions to urban agriculture in Australia. To organise all the activities, I have borrowed the categories set out by the Design Trust for Public Space in their report, *Five Borough Farm: Seeding the Future of Urban Agriculture in New York City* (2012). The categories are: Community Farms, Commercial Farms, Institutional Farms and Community Gardens. During my research I found these categories didn’t automatically fit the urban agriculture scene in Australia. Consequently, I have added two new categories:

1. Grassroots Interventions, to accommodate the guerrilla gardening and community organisations contributing to this movement.

2. Online Applications, to address the increase in online apps that connect an audience with a desired outcome such as backyard produce gluts, leftover food and farmyard fresh produce.

Through developing Table 2 I identified that, although urban agriculture activities are taking place across Australia, Melbourne is where these types of initiatives are happening in great numbers. Similar to cities such as San Francisco and Berlin, Melbourne has fostered a culture of creativity and small scale enterprise which lends itself to exploration around current affairs such as sustainability, food security and food justice issues.

Next I wanted to further explore those projects I grouped in the categories ‘Grassroots Interventions’ and ‘Online Applications’. I decided to plot these activities onto a map to understand the types of features each of the projects offered and how the projects operated.

See diagram overleaf, Grassroots and Online Application Projects.
## Table 3: Grassroots and Online Application Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>The Lemon Tree Project</th>
<th>3000 Acres</th>
<th>Darebin Fruit Squad</th>
<th>Reclaim The Curb</th>
<th>Sharing Abundance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Active citizen participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Youth development and education</td>
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<td>•</td>
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<tr>
<td>Safe spaces</td>
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<tr>
<td>Integrating Aging</td>
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<tr>
<td>Development of Social Etiquette</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Economic</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Non Monetary Exchange</td>
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<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local economic stimulation</td>
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<td>•</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food affordability and access</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mutually beneficial exchange</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enabling a flow from a place of abundance to a place of need</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ecological</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Promoting an awareness of food systems ecology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stewardship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connection between people and the natural environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connection between people and their food system</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ownership</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Public land, no permission sort</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public land, permission granted</td>
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<tr>
<td>Private land, activating space</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Media Coverage</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Media</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mass Media</td>
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<tr>
<td>Below the line and alternative avenues</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Operational</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding: Grants</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding: Fundraising</td>
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<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
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<tr>
<td>No Funding</td>
<td>•</td>
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<td>•</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteer Reliance</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
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<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Features**

- **Social**
- **Economic**
- **Ecological**
- **Ownership**
- **Media Coverage**
- **Operational**
What I found interesting about this process was not the basic features of these projects but rather their operational tendencies. Most of these projects rely heavily on grants and volunteer involvement. Such projects inherently rely on the individual’s passion for the cause or activism. As a result there seems to be a built in lifecycle in these projects as people that are involved in them eventually run out of motivation or experience volunteer fatigue.

The last fruit harvest and site to be reclaimed occurred for me in mid 2014. By this stage I had moved to Castlemaine from Melbourne and had two children (compared to when I started, when I had none!). My involvement with urban agriculture at this point moved from an on the ground focus to a more administrative focus as I put my effort into constructing manuals to support Growing Abundance in Castlemaine, supporting other groups to realise their own version of backyard fruit harvesting.

During this reflection process I have been given the opportunity to stand back and look into this sphere as both a member of the community and an outsider. I feel there was a landmark moment for the broader group in February 2014 when the federal government decided to scrap the $1.5 million community food grant scheme it had initiated and which was designed to support projects like the ones reviewed here.

There were 364 applications.

Applicants were notified by letter that there would be no money, despite the effort put into applying for the grants. The grant scheme was canned due to pressures on the government to maintain a budget surplus. For projects that were relying on grants to set up or maintain themselves, this type of action can be catastrophic. The moral ramifications of this action shed bright light on the lack of support federal governments were willing to provide for small scale, community based innovations that address significant social, ecological and health issues.

Since 2014, there has been a lack of on the ground projects established, with the exception of 3000 acres which received a substantial grant from VicHealth.
2.5 Community of Practice

Community of Practice is a term used to identify practices and practitioners that using similar methodology or who work in similar theoretical and material spaces.

Before this term was introduced to me, I had already actively sought out my community of practice. As part of my practice I research the area that I want to design within. When I research I’m seeking knowledge, inspiration and co-conspirators. By building a knowledge area about a space I am able to create a detailed understanding of how my design can help. By finding other projects operating in similar spaces, even if geographically they aren’t located where I am, I can use those projects as inspiration for my own and those people that are involved in them can offer guidance and advice.

What I find most exciting about the research phase is meeting co-conspirators. Sometimes they are people I already have a relationship with, while others are completely new people whom I have approached, or they have approached me to get involved with a project.

With each of the projects I have developed a slightly different community of practice. I detail this below.

The Foraging Commons

Inspired by the group Fallen Fruit in LA, I began seeking out other groups mapping edible food in or over public gardens. I uncovered an active group of mappers across the globe. I contacted those located in Australia and New Zealand. Through these contacts, and by facilitating introductions, we decided to come together to combine maps, producing a holistic one for Australia and New Zealand. So the community of people involved in these mapping projects I connected with for inspiration and guidance became my co-conspirators in forming The Foraging Commons.
Sharing Abundance
During the research phase for this project I identified several projects that inspired my system design. Incredible Edible, Abundance Sheffield, Abundance Cardiff (all located in the UK) and Not Far from the Tree in Canada were particular projects that formed this inspiration base.

During the testing phase for this project I was connected with Growing Abundance, a similar project in Castlemaine, Victoria. This project began at the same time as mine, and after making contact we formed a mutually beneficial relationship, sharing ideas, advice and experience. Over time, and with a move to Castlemaine, Growing Abundance moved from just inspiration to becoming a co-conspirator. To collect the experiences and pull together a guide book on how to hold backyard harvests, I teamed up with Growing Abundance and this work was a collaboration of both our efforts.

Reclaim the Curb
This project was inspired by findings from The Foraging Commons, but brought to life through dreamy conversations with friends about how amazing it would be if the streets were lined with fruit trees. To make this project happen I contacted Michael Green, activist, doer and journalist. Through his extensive connections we emailed seeking anyone else who would like to come forward to ‘make something happen’. From this email, 12 people came forward who would become my co-conspirators for this project.

Interestingly, I didn’t actively seek out working examples of like projects during the research phase for this project. There were a lot of guerrilla gardening initiatives happening in Melbourne, and in developed cities globally. I wanted to engage with something slightly more formal in its approach, putting activism into a realm of actually doing something instead of just talking about it.

Once the project was being tested on community curbs, I became aware of several other projects globally. Most famously, Better Blocks was a great inspiration; however, its approach is much broader than Reclaim the Curb in which the focus is just on building a garden together. Nevertheless, it has offered me much inspiration for this project.
Since commencing this practice another project has emerged which I find very inspiring. Food is Free is a project that operates through the power of social media. Participants are encouraged to post a photo with details of the location of produce that is free and can be collected. This is often a harvest from the backyard. The post is tagged with the hash tag #foodisfree. It’s an exciting initiative that has quickly gained global traction.

It’s an easy idea to access, limited barriers to getting involved and promotes a very simple message. This project has grown incredibly, particularly during the time since I took a step back from my projects to focus on this reflective piece. It makes me excited that there might still be an interest in these types of projects, even if the fad around food has passed.
2.6 Conclusion

This chapter establishes the theoretical framework for this body of work, and locates my practice at the nexus of sustainability, activism and urban agriculture.

Originally created out of the environmental movement, sustainability in its modern manifestation has become a special interest group with limited influence, its meaning diluted by becoming all things to all people. Its evolution to an aesthetic discourse, with little or no grounding in creating real change, has compromised its integrity and made it the close cousin of consumerism. We think we can buy our way to environmental heaven, technology will fix the problem, or the market, through pricing, will wash our environmental sins clean.

The fundamental vacuum existing in the modern sustainability movement is caused by a lack of altruistic values. It is for our common good that natural resources are protected, maintained and improved – self-interest is in fact shared interest. However, with its faith in markets, technology and consumer appeal, sustainability has been co-opted by the self-interested market and reinforces a perception that environmental matters are only for those that can ‘afford’ to worry about it. For those buying into sustainability, the trap is individualised ‘green smug’ and losing sight of shared interest altogether.

This body of work attempts to address this shortcoming of the sustainability movement, by appealing to cultural and social values consistent across demographics. They have ideologically neutral positioning, and appeal to our human need for social connection and the simple pleasure of making real things, together. They promote the idea of neighbourly connectedness over saving the planet, neutralising the potential for environmental dogma. By appealing to the rebel, free spirit in all of us, they make environmental practices more interesting and appealing, which will ultimately mean more people to want to be engaged in this activity.

While not solutions to the great environmental issues of our time, they are experiments that reveal important insights, building on activism’s strong historical tie with environmental sustainability and food. They recognise that conventional notions of protesting and picket lines have failed to bring about the policy reforms necessary to protect our environment,
and that the rift caused by industrialisation, and the separation of human endeavour from ecological systems, is as wide as ever. Urban agriculture may not feed the masses tomorrow, but by co-locating food and people in urban settings, there is potential to mend the human psyche and cultivate a shared understanding of the interdependence of human and ecological systems.

Critical to the design of these practices has been adopting the ethos of asking for forgiveness instead of permission. This gentle disobedience is empowering to the activist, as it fosters a wilful ignorance of the system’s attempts at control and judgment, and so the freedom to fail without consequence. In this way, the individual is given the opportunity for authenticity, which becomes a force for connecting with others and becoming resilient to broader system constraints placed on innovation. In time, there is the potential for new behaviours, underpinned by new shared values, to emerge and grow.
Contours, colours and shapes

Unpacking change making theory and proposing a model for community scale projects

3.1 Introduction

Encouraging pro environmental behaviours is a topic of much interest in academic, industry and public discourse, reflecting broader concerns around the lack of action currently being taken at a governmental policy level and by industry leadership. This leaves citizens feeling both powerless yet responsible to take action in any way they feel they can contribute.

The problems with leaving the responsibilities for pro-environmental action to individual citizens are:

- individuals may not feel empowered to change due to barriers of lack of knowledge, time or cost;
- humans are social creatures, so without collective action motivation will decrease over time;
- much needed, systemic change is unlikely to happen without government policy intervention and/or industry leadership.

As a designer, I have chosen to focus on projects that have strong pro-environmental behavioural outcomes. What has become very interesting for me are the variants in participants’ environmental knowledge and willingness to engage in pro environmental behaviour. Further to this, I have found overwhelmingly that once engaged in a joint activity, social and ideological barriers seem to dissolve as the activity itself becomes the main focus.
Conversely it is the social and ideological positions that can get in the way of engagement with a project. This is a significant concern when positioning the project and using media to raise both broad and targeted awareness.

Through the reflection process I have become aware of not only the methodology that I utilise in developing and executing each project, but also the practice outcomes and the theoretical framework influencing the projects. Further to this, I have become aware of an intangible factor produced by me, the designer, and its effect on the practice. This intangible factor lies at the heart of the type of practice I’m involved in. What has an important effect on outcomes is the desire, drive, willingness to try (and sometimes fail), and ability to draw people together on the journey.

This chapter explores the practice outcomes I have identified through this reflective process. These are: fostering participation, realising agency and generating community.

From this discussion I then explore the concept of making change, drawing insights from Holling’s theory of panarchy. This model forms the basis for my thinking around not only change making but also the power of models to demonstrate ideas and support creative enquiry. To create a model of my practice I first have to unpack the methodology I use. Being derived from a series of linear steps, I realise the model runs a risk of being highly technocratic. Through the research of models and the process of designing models I am able to address this concern and distil a more human centred understanding of my practice.

The model I present in this chapter is inspired by Kepler’s investigation, in his book *Mysterium Cosmographicum*, into the distance between six planets. I have been able to draw on previous speculations on my methodology which involved a spiral formation. I have layered this with two triangles placed on top of each other, but one upside down. The points of each of these triangles represent the two sets of three factors or triads identified within my theoretical framework (sustainability, activism and urban agriculture) and project outcomes (fostering participation, realising agency and generating community). At the intersections of the spiral crossing over the lines of the triangles I am able to identify points of significant

Figure 2: Kepler’s model from *Mysterium Cosmographicum*
project development and insight which chart the project’s progress and my practice. At the centre of the spiral is the beginning point and heart of each project. These are the internal, intangible drivers that make each project unique. By reconciling all these elements, this model can now be shared and applied to more scenarios, informing the creation of projects and a continued process of learning and refinement.

### 3.2 Practice Outcomes
Through the reflection process undertaken during for this PhD thesis I have identified three practice outcomes that are consistent across my work. These are:

- Fostering Participation.
- Realising Agency.
- Generating Community.

These outcomes exist in each of the project within this body of work but how they are manifested differs. The discussion below explores each of these practice outcomes.

**Fostering Participation**
In their book *Affluenza* (2005), Hamilton and Denniss show that Australians are living with conflicting attitudes of wanting to avoid environmental damage while participating in wasteful, materialistic lifestyles. The understanding gained from Ajzen’s *Theory of Planned Behaviour* (1991) indicate that when there are conflicting attitudes, the influence from subjective norms and perceived behaviour control gain importance in predicting intention. This is why even those people who identify themselves as holding pro-environmental attitudes but don’t necessarily carry through with pro-environmental behaviour, often using arguments such as ‘I will if you will’ (referring to the influence of subjective norms) and ‘I’m
only one person, I won’t change anything’ (referring to the influence of perceived behaviour control). Therefore, it is critical to address subjective norms and perceived behaviour control to establish pro environmental behaviour.

Initiatives that engage in group or collective action, that don’t try to fix all problems but engage in focused endeavours, and activities that are made culturally and socially appealing, have proved most successful in encouraging pro environmental behaviour. These activity designs manage to overcome the negative influences of subjective norms and perceived behaviour control when pro–environmental attitudes are already present (Moyer et al, 2003). Initiatives such as The Clothing Exchange fulfil all of these factors, perhaps underpinning its longevity of almost ten years of operation.

Interestingly, much of the literature that utilises the Theory of Planned Behaviour to predict pro environmental behaviour positions the research as investigating behaviour change. The notion of change holds many social and cultural connotations that are often negatively geared – people tend to fear change. With this in mind, positioning pro–environmental activities needs to step away from stale preconceived notions of pro–environmental behaviour, and make the action more exciting than separating the paper from the plastics.

When addressing and designing the systems for the projects in this body of work, I took my understanding of change making behaviour and my experiences gained from being involved in The Clothing Exchange. The practice involves locating fruit trees, seeking permission (or not), organising to harvest the fruit, harvesting the fruit, sharing the harvest, delivering the fruit to community spaces such as schools and hospitals, designing and building gardens, and maintaining the reclaimed space. For these activities to happen they require me and/ or a group of people to actively participate in doing them. Participation is the heart of this practice. But it’s not just being there; it’s being actively involved in connecting with the environment, a food system, a community, and bringing to life shared cultural values that may not be present in participants’ daily lives.

Figure 3: The Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen 1991)
In *Doing Democracy* (2001), Bill Moyer et al discuss and demonstrate how successful social movements operate and how to emulate their strategies. They state that a movement’s success lies in its ability to

... convince the great majority of people that the movement, not the elite powerholders, truly represent society’s positive and widely held values and sensibilities. On the other hand, movements are self-destructive to the extent that they are defined as rebellious, on the fringes of society, and in opposition to the society’s cherished core social values, symbols, rituals, beliefs and principles (Moyer et al, 2001, p.11).

Although my practice is small in scale and did not ‘convince the great majority of people’ to participate, the projects are working examples of this strategy. Project participants actively recall moments in their lives when they found the best, sweetest berry bush or the juiciest lemons, or how the mulberry tree was the heart of their social life as teenagers. These are moments held sacred as a memory of a fun, perhaps better time. The project reconnects with these moments and demonstrates how these culturally held values of sharing, giving and receiving, being neighbourly and connecting people can still exist today. The project then has the ability to build on this in a broad appealing way, to scale up and engage with significant behavioural change.

Fostering participation is at the heart of this practice. This is how I engage people to be part of the project and the bigger issues these projects begin to address.

**Realising Agency**  
During the second year of Reclaim the Curb, having moved out of Melbourne and having to step away from the physical activity of making a garden, I wanted to see if I could grow this project beyond the people I knew and their friendly neighbours. I set up a competition for Victorian residents to ‘reclaim their curb’. One of the winners of this competition was Paul Sheehan, a teacher from Melbourne’s inner north. The garden he made with the support of the competition was well considered, aesthetically pleasing and got the whole neighbourhood talking. He enjoyed this process so much he went on to participate in his
local council’s community consultative process around open spaces strategy. Paul’s garden went on to be a benchmark example of how residents can use the nature strips in front of their houses.

This is an example of how collective agency has been activated by the projects. When I reflect on how the different projects cultivated agency within its participants and others that were somehow affected by the work, there is great variation. The Foraging Commons project, and the public reaction to the media article that mentioned it, caused many people who felt affected by the work to speak out. In this instance the agency realised by others was not intentional but helped improve the project. Sharing Abundance, with its prescriptive rules and crowd pleasing nature, was less successful at engaging with participants’ agency than Reclaim the Curb which appealed to the more activist participants and gave permission for acts of gentle civil disobedience.

This sense of empowerment was experienced by others involved in the Reclaim the Curb project as they were inspired by the opportunity of taking a chance, with support for doing something constructive they too believed in, and accepting failure. The levels of agency differed from person to person engaged in the projects. However, the Reclaim the Curb project was a stand out for activating agency in participants. Upon reflection it is hard to know whether it was the type of people attracted to the project who already possessed the drive and desire to break a few rules and make something happen, or whether the project empowered them to actually do it. Regardless, their experience within the Reclaim the Curb project was part of their journey onto something else, affecting the way they realise agency in their own work.

The journey for me of creating these projects and responding to feedback has enabled me to realise my own agency. The experience of the public feedback from The Foraging Commons project was a ‘baptism of fire’ type moment when I realised my work had effects on others, and that what I did needed to be fully considered. The process of taking on a PhD to explore my practice, place it within a theoretical framework and discover what I actually do within the realms of ‘the institution’ enabled me to fully realise my agency. The resulting
methodology I am able to distil now, like a recipe for a cake, can be passed on, shared and tested by others. This process has taken my agency from just someone giving it a go, to a considered practice that has direction.

**Generating Community**

The third outcome of this practice is that it generates community. By this I mean first, the community of designers, activists and change makers that join me in the development phase of each project, and whom I call co-conspirators; and second, the community generated from the project itself, such as the neighbourhoods that have reclaimed their cubs and those people who happen to be affected by the work.

Co-conspirators is a term I give to the people I collaborate with. In keeping with the civil disobedience theme of the projects, the people who have brought the projects to life for me are those I brainstorm with, work with, talk with and make things happen with. The various skills sets have improved the projects and the conversations have challenged them. For the three projects profiled in this body of work, the co-conspirators have changed, as my location, interests and time available have changed too. Some of the co-conspirators were intimately involved in the project (such as the group that came together in my lounge room to Reclaim the Curb), whereas others were loosely associated and connected via email or other online platforms such as the mapping group involved in The Foraging Commons. Some of these co-conspirators are also part of my community of practice; for example, the people involved in the Growing Abundance project in Castlemaine.

The communities that experienced or received one of the projects are also part of this practice. One of the main goals for the projects was to connect people to others when they may not have had an opportunity to meet before. The social element of the projects and the human interactions are what makes these projects so rich in experience and worthwhile to be involved in.

What has become apparent through the projects is the participants’ desire to act civically. The concept of acting civically is not new to urban agriculture or the broader food system.
Rather, this body of work adds to the form of gentler capitalism already happening. In his book *Civic Agriculture* (2004), Thomas Lyson identified a counter trend to the globalised, industrialised food system. Civic Agriculture is about localising food production, not only better environmentally, but also better for a community’s social and economic development, as these outcomes tend to be tightly linked.

Examples of Civic Agriculture cited by Lyson (2004) include farmers markets, roadside stalls, community gardens and community supported agriculture initiatives. Lyson explains that these manifestations of Civic Agriculture have in common

... the potential to nurture local economic development, maintain diversity and quality in products, and provide forums where producers and consumers can come together to solidify bonds of community (Lyson, 2004, p.86).

Further to this, the anonymity often associated with consumption purchases in larger environments such as supermarkets or shopping malls, and which is so common today, is replaced with a closer, personal experience of exchange, often directly with the producer. This person–to–person exchange has the power to influence the meaning of the consumption purchase, potentially reducing excess and wastefulness.

These purchasing processes are not new; rather, they are reconsidered, redesigned and repositioned ideas from times past. It is often commented that the skills associated with environmental resilience are not lost; rather, they are just missing from the last generation which was largely seduced by the glamour of the highly industrialised, technologised, globalised economy which values individual wealth creation above all else.

Lyson (2004) cites two major studies that explored the impacts of an economy organised around large-scale economic enterprises in the wake of World War 2 in the USA. These studies examine ‘the relationship between the concentration of economic power at the community level and the social and economic well–being of local residents’ (Lyson, 2004, p.64). Not surprisingly, the findings of both studies showed that
... communities in which the economic base was composed of a plethora of relatively small, locally owned firms would manifest higher levels of social, economic and political welfare and well-being than communities where the economic base was dominated by a few large, absentee-owned firms (Lyson, 2004, p.64).

One of the paper’s cited is **Small Business and Civic Welfare**, authored by Wright Mills and Melville Ulmer. This paper offers insights that show the importance of civic orientated behaviour. The study focuses on manufacturing-dependent communities and is interested in understanding the ‘effects of big and small business on city life’ (cited in Lyson, 2004, p.64). They found that communities with high levels of civic spirit cultivated higher levels of wellbeing and welfare. In their words:

> Civic spirit may be said to exist in a city where there is widespread participation in civic affairs on the part of those able to benefit a community by voluntary management of civic enterprises. These enterprises may consist of attempts to improve the parks, obtain between schools, make the streets broader, etc. (cited in Lyson, 2004, p.65)

Interestingly, Mills and Ulmer identified the independent middle class as the driving force behind civic engagement. They found this group of economic actors ‘usually took the lead in voluntary management of civic enterprises’ (cited in Lyson, 2004, p.66).

### 3.3 Making Change

This practice is an exploration into pro environmental behaviour by creating opportunities for people to be involved in projects that are more interesting than separating your paper from your plastics. In essence, it is about making changes to behavioural patterns by cultivating everyday activities that are environmentally friendly.

Theoretically, making change has been a query of much investigation. A theory that best addresses the type of changemaking activity my practice engages with is Holling’s theory of panarchy.
Holling describes panarchy as

... how a healthy system can invent and experiment, benefiting from inventions that create opportunity while being kept safe from those that destabilize because of their nature or excessive exuberance” (Holling, 2009 p. 390).

Holling’s panarchy theory is based on a hierarchy of levels that operate at different speeds. The slower and larger levels protect the faster, smaller cycles of innovation, which in response invigorate the slower and larger levels. This nested set of levels ranges in scales from a leaf to an inter-governamental conference.

Holling believes this process helps clarify the meaning of ‘sustainable development’. He states: ‘Sustainability is the capacity to create, test and maintain adaptive capability. Development is the process of creating, testing, and maintaining opportunity’ (Holling, 2001, p. 390). By combining the two words, sustainable development thus refers to ‘the goal of fostering adaptive capabilities and creating opportunities’ (Holling, 2001, p. 390).

Panarchy theory is helpful in finding the meaning in my practice as my work is located in the smaller, faster moving levels that foster innovation. At this scale, individuals and communities can identify with the projects and are drawn to be involved. The actions that happen at this level invigorate the larger, slower levels of the system. In the case of my practice, this could be local government or even state government policy.

Because the levels are connected, processes of growth and renewal can occur creatively at one place, but also have impact in others. This can have both a positive and negative affect. The inherent bias that can occur, of an action causing a reaction, is often a problem with activism. Activist groups such as Friends of the Earth tend to exist to be activists – that is, they protest, educate and spark conversation around specific issues. Their focus is typically not demonstrating solutions, though less publicly they may support creation of solutions. As a result, there is a public perception of activists being destructive, or even lazy. Protesting is seen as the easy way out, as opposed to the hard grind of getting results in the real economy.
What is important for my practice is the scale the work operates on and its demonstrative nature. The projects aim to create a friendly vehicle that allows people to experience, and in some cases be transported to, an alternative daily practice with few barriers to involvement. The projects are an outlet for exploring new behaviours, and this happens without an inherent ideological bias. Inherent bias is avoided by incorporating any resistance into part of the project as it evolves. For example, negative responses generated by the media coverage of The Foraging Commons project were woven back into the project and helped inform following projects.

Holling suggests that by developing an understanding of the cycles and scales that exist in a panarchy system structure, it may be possible to evaluate activities that contribute to sustainability. Critically, the panarchy system structure also points out where the system is able to accept positive change and points where it is vulnerable (Holling, 2001). This understanding then makes it possible for those points to be leveraged to ‘foster resilience and sustainability within a system’ (Holling, 2001, p. 390).

Through the reflective process of this practice, and particularly the final stages of collecting the work together and articulating the narrative that flows through the work, I’ve begun to notice patterns, recurring topic areas and repeating components inherent to all the projects. I can manipulate each of these components to be present at differing levels and these affect the project’s audience and outcomes. Through the lens of the panarchy theory, these components are actually areas of importance that vary between projects, although they exist in all projects. By unpacking these components in my practice, I have begun to develop an understanding of the application for change that is unique to my practice.
3.4 Practice Methodology

To develop a greater understanding of my practice, I have distilled the methodology undertaken in each project. Each project is made up of six stages. They are:

1. Identification of a space to explore – can be physical, ideological, practical, or any combination of these.

2. Research–like projects – usually through observation, but can be through experience in taking part, or through conversation.

3. Designing a system – using the tools and techniques I have at my disposal I design a simple system.

4. Test it out – physically go into the field and test it out by making it happen.

5. Reflect on successes, opportunities etc – this is done both internally and through external feedback.

6. Weave the feedback into the project to improve it.

This process is a highly iterative form of in field, rapid prototyping. By keeping the design simple, changes can be quickly integrated to tweak and improve. Feedback on the design of the project is generated from media, participants or experience. Figuring out whether it works or not is just a matter of trial and error. At the end of the process, once a final ‘product’ has been tested, refined and shown to work, a guide is created on how others can copy, emulate and learn from the experiences of these projects.

The methodology presented here is similar to service design methodologies, and is highly technocratic. It reads like a recipe, not too dissimilar to the guides I created at the end of each project to record what happened and to allow others to carry on and build upon them.
During this reflection process, it has become increasingly clear that these steps, and just a guide book on how to run a project, aren’t enough. Governments, activist groups, community groups and health organisations have spent vast amounts of time, energy and resources on ‘how to live more sustainably’. None of these guides have actually made a difference to our everyday practices.

One argument that could be presented here is that the problem is too big for individuals like you and me to make a meaningful difference. But this line of argument is dull, predictable and provides an excuse for moving the problem from our concern to someone else’s. Holling’s theory of panarchy indicates that change can happen at different levels in different ways, it’s just a matter of making it happen.

What then makes this practice, my practice, interesting, different, meaningful and worthy? Why were people drawn to it? Why would it not be the same should someone else do it?

When I think back to my body of work, particularly back to when it all began, I wonder why I kept it all going. Experiencing the feedback generated by the media over The Foraging Commons was one of the most awful moments I have experienced. I was embarrassed and ashamed. My family had been harassed at their doorstep. But instead of walking away I decided to stick with it. I chose to do a reflective practice PhD to help me work through what had happened and build up my practice again.

When things get tough, such as writing this dissertation, I still daydream about that moment, and instead of being pushed over, I push out. The work would have disappeared with the next news cycle and no one would be the wiser. But instead I made more projects, I agreed to more media articles, I talked more about what I wanted to explore, and I read more about the field of study and practice I was exploring.

Marcus Westbury talks about how spaces you are physically in can affect this desire to experiment, regardless of the potential to fail. However, I think it’s more than just spaces: it’s a matter of the heart.
The drive to keep trying, the resilience of true enthusiasm, the appeal of honest exploration, and the integrity that comes when responsibility is felt – these are all facets of me as a practitioner. How I feel about my work comes out in my practice. These personal qualities are just as important as the steps to take in making a project happen, and is the reason why this body of work produced the project outcomes it has.

3.5 Modeling My Practice

A model is a visual representation of an object or a situation. By graphically mapping out a journey, process, discussion, debate or movement, an audience can then quickly gain an understanding of the forces, flows and method being engaged with. Simply put, a model can make things easier to understand. Because of their visual representation, models can also be ‘vehicles for spreading knowledge’ (Downton, 2003, p.86) by bridging gaps in language, prior learnings and potential time constraints.

Further to this, a model can be a research method into itself. Shafique and Mahmood explain this as it ‘assists researchers, investigators and scientists in relating more accurately to reality; it also aids them to describe, predict, test or understand complex systems or events’ (2010). The process of creating a model is inherently a creative and explorative process as it requires the practitioner to reflect, distil and recreate. Downton (2003) explores this further by processing that a model facilitates learning:

_Exploration of the model’s qualities and an evaluation of the theory of its connection to the thing modeled is a means of learning about the thing modeled, the field of inquiry, and also about the processes of making appropriate models_’ (Downton, 2003, p. 86).

Therefore, creating a model as part of my reflective practice is crucial tool to utilise so that not only I can learn from what I have done, but others can as well. The model creation process has enabled me to transform from the guided to the guide.
By distilling my practice in order to create a model I have needed to evaluate the relationship between theory and practice. Derman (2011) contrasts models with theories, arguing that within the social sciences disciplines, practitioners can only make models, metaphors or analogies opposed to theories, due to the complexity of human behaviour making predicting a reliable outcome impossible. It was, therefore, critical that in my model creation process, the model had flexibility and an iterative quality built into it.

The creation process of a model as part of my reflective creative practice has brought me back to the beginning of my practice, where I was creating maps via a rudimentary form of cartography. I was simply marking by hand on a photocopied map from a street directory where food was growing on or over public land. There was nothing advanced or original about the process, but to my knowledge no one had bothered to record where local food was being grown in the suburb where I lived in Newcastle NSW (See: Map 1). Kris Harzinski, the founder of the Hand Drawn Map Association, describes these chance recordings on maps that I was experiencing in this process: ‘the maps had become much more than useful directions from one place to another, they had become accidental records of a moment in time’ (Harzinski, 2010, p. 9).

Using a similar process I used at the beginning of this body of work, I mapped how my projects built upon each other and my change of locations utilising a cartographic–like approach. That is, I made a map (See: Map 2). Turchi describes mapmaking as this: ‘To ask for a map is to say, “Tell me a story.”’ (Turchi, 2004, p.11). By recording my process by mapping it out, I was inadvertently sharing the story of my practice. In this diagram the movement between spaces and projects is clearly identified. What became apparent during the process of creating this diagram is the spiral like design of the journey where each project builds upon the prior project.
Building upon my mapping work, diagrammatically I can use a spiral like formation as a basis for displaying the methodology of my practice, not just to illustrate the overall journey of this body of work (See: Map 3).

Interestingly, once I decided on this, spirals in diagrams started showing up in many places. Most notably in service design texts. However, I found most of these diagrams highly technocratic and missed much of the knowledge and essence behind my practice.

This is Service Design Thinking (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2011) thoroughly maps out the tools and methodology that designers can engage with to execute a more human centred design approach. The Agile Development model maps out an iterative methodology that ‘allows projects to grow and develop over time, adapting around both the evolving needs of the client, and the research materials the project may generate’ (pp. 196). This methodology I found was not dissimilar to the approach I had distilled from my practice, and interestingly also used a spiral formation to communicate the iterative nature of the practice. What this model lacked, however, is the underlying ideology and knowledge areas that contribute to the project’s development.

The Field Guide to Human Centered Design by IDEO, similarly outlines many different tools to use to achieve a human centered design approach. The ‘Ways to Grow Framework’, offered an interesting piece of inspiration for me during my model development with the X and Y axis intersecting and drawing the evolution of the project (pp. 143). This model gave me the idea of overlapping the lines of the triangles to create intersections where points of interest and moments in my methodology could be discussed.

The final model that I found influential for my design process surprised me as I found the model that is not my methodology. The design or development process distilled by the Norwegian Design Council, in the book Innovation with People: The Business of Inclusive Design (2010), separates into two distinct sections; the ideation stage and the operate stage. When reading the description and reviewing the model I found it clear and easy to approach. However, it does not reflect my own experience of service design. My experience of design is much more iterative and messy than this. The ideation stage and the operate stage are not two separate processes, but rather a free flowing movement of one informing the other, again and again until a worthwhile solution emerges.
3.6 The Model

The challenge of creating this model lay in combining the four different components I have identified as being important to my practice and necessary for a model to act as a guide to others. They are:

1. Methodology.

2. Theoretical Frameworks.

3. Practice Outcomes.


During my practice development, I had identified that the methodology I had engaged with can be diagrammatically displayed in a spiral formation. For this model, however, I needed to merge the methodology with the theoretical frameworks and practice outcomes.

Each of the theoretical frameworks and practice outcomes had three significant factors to them: twin triads. Combining the two triads, or six points, in a way that was meaningful with intersections and relationships between the points, led me to explore geometric shapes. Kepler’s theory and book, Mysterium Cosmographicum, proved highly inspirational. The theory proposes that the distance between six planets could be visually understood in terms of five Platonic solids. By enclosing the diagram within a sphere, Kepler was able to represent Saturn’s orbit. Incidentally, in this process he proved that the theory of heliocentrism is physically true.

Drawing back from Kepler’s three-dimensional astronomy modelling, reducing the geometry to two dimension to keep it simple, I was able to conduct a series of diagrammatic experiments. Eventually I arrived at the point where the theoretical framework and the practice outcomes could each be allocated a triangle. One triangle could be filled upside down so that both shapes could be overlapped onto each other, but all the points hold their own equal space and standing. The spiral formation could be placed over the top with
Model: Framework for understanding my practice

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KEY

SU Sustainability
AC Activism
UA Urban Agriculture
FP Fostering Participation
RA Realising Agency
GC Generating Community
the movement of the methodology beginning from the inside and moving outwards. At
the points where the spiral intersects a line of the triangle, I mark a dot and number it.
This process, not unlike the process I used when marking edible food locations on a street
directory map, is methodical and offers an insight into how a project can be developed. By
playing around with the points of the triangle, I can quickly create a layered story of method
stage, theoretical area and practice outcome which is relevant to this type of work.

Through carefully selecting the location of the theoretical framework and practice outcome
points, and the intersections that the spiral makes on the triangular shapes, the journey of
my practice can be diagrammatically modelled.

This journey is tabled above.

3.6.1 Model for The Foraging Commons

See Model overleaf.

Taking the model I developed to diagrammatically describe my practice, I have been able to
relate it to each of the projects profiled in this dissertation. As I applied it to each project, I
was able to profile unique events and significant moments that happened in each project.

The first project I applied the model to was The Foraging Commons. I will begin in the
middle of the spiral and work along the line describing the sequence of events and project
methodology in the context of this project.

The centre of the model represents the internal processes behind the project. More
specifically, this is the core of the drive and desire to make the project happen.

For The Foraging Commons the motivation to drive the project began initially out of
curiosity. As the project progressed I read, observed and spoke to people about the project
more broadly and the motivation grew to a much deeper desire to challenge notions around
ownership, value and exchange. This project had tapped into an area of interest for me
Project: The Foraging Commons

KEY

SU  Sustainability
AC  Activism
UA  Urban Agriculture
FP  Fostering Participation
RA  Realising Agency
GC  Generating Community

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that I wanted to know more about. From experience I gained through doing my masters and being involved in The Clothing Exchange, I knew inherently that theoretical research without practical application wasn’t enough for me. I need to experience things in real life to gain meaning from them and to see whether what I think actually plays out in the world. Of course, at the beginning I didn’t anticipate the journey this project would take me on. I anticipated that, like The Clothing Exchange, most people would see the fun side of it.

What I found quite incredible during this early exploration stage (Stage 1 in the methodology) is that although sustainability and urban agriculture seem well aligned from first impressions, many of the physical and social outcomes of urban agriculture projects haven’t been fully considered (A). For example, the aesthetic of a community garden where people come together and share the produce grown sit juxtaposed with internal politics of people try to share common land, the (often) lack of productivity of community gardens and the resource intensity of some gardening practices.

What I did find encouraging during the early scoping process of the project is the community of people also exploring their local areas and documenting where food was grown on or over public land. They were welcoming when I approached them and full of advice and tips to help develop my project. At this point I was able to act as a connector, introducing people whom I had sought out with others who were dealing with similar issues. I created a network of urban food mappers across Australia and New Zealand. Through just talking and sharing experiences I was able to generate a community while scoping the project (B). Upon reflection this part of the project becomes one of the more crucial points of the development of the practice. Without a supportive community, the project is very difficult to develop.

Once I began the process of physically mapping the streets of the suburb I was living in, Cooks Hill in Newcastle, NSW, I realised the process of walking up and down streets was something I really enjoyed. With me I carried a homemade clipboard with a photocopy of the suburb from a street directory. I would highlight the streets I had walked down so I knew where I had been. Should I encounter an edible plant growing on or over public land on my way I would mark it on the map, take a photograph of it and identify the plant through simple notes around the edges of the map. The photographs and the location plots were then
transferred onto a shared online mapping platform. Originally it was Google Maps; however, once the broader mapping community started using this singular Google map a more robust geomapping, data collection site was invested in (E).

The online mapping application grew and so did the community of mappers. To promote the project, I began using social media such as Twitter and an online project incubation website called Plan Big. The first media coverage for The Foraging Commons was a significant moment in developing this project. I didn’t anticipate the project would be complete by the time the media coverage occurred and this didn’t deter me as I was interested in the opportunity to amplify the project and continue to improve it.

An article which mentioned The Foraging Commons project, a photograph of me in a community garden and a segment of the map featuring suburbs around the lower north shore in Sydney, was published in the Sunday Age, November 2010. The project, and I as the person behind the project, received harsh criticism from the members of the community garden where I was photographed. The process of receiving the feedback, distilling it and working out what to do with it, turned out to be the most fundamental moment in this practice (G–I).

It was embarrassing to be so publicly ridiculed, so much so that I took down my blog where some of the comments were left. I could easily have walked away from the project at that stage, admitting that perhaps it was too hard, I had stepped too far, the questions I had probed were too sensitive. But instead I chose to take the criticism, turn it into feedback and continue not only with the project but to create more projects. To do this I used the support from the community I had generated around mapping, and the future communities I would generate around each of the projects to come, and my desire to continue to explore.
Project: Reclaim the Curb

**KEY**

- SU: Sustainability
- AC: Activism
- UA: Urban Agriculture
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CHAPTER 3 — CONTOURS, COLOURS AND SHAPES
3.6.2 Model for Reclaim the Curb

See Model above.

Applying the model to the Reclaim the Curb project offered the chance to reflect on the cause of the project and the significant moments within the project, as well as build upon the workings of the model.

Beginning from the centre vortex of the spiral, I am given a chance to revisit the original intent of the project. The idea behind Reclaim the Curb was originally a finding from the feedback received from The Foraging Commons Project. During the process of mapping, when I was physically walking the streets, I discovered there actually wasn’t that much being grown on or over public land. There was, however, a lot of space to grow things on.

However, the drive for this project was uncovered when I was exploring broader issues around urban agriculture and the issues of co-locating people and food (A). I was inspired by examples from the Victory Gardens during World War 2, particularly the resilience of the communities that got together to do something constructive, and the city agricultural plots in Cuba where productivity of small size farming offers a lot to be admired. But it was the informal conversations I had with people also exploring this space of food and resilience. Off-handed comments about ‘why aren’t all the streets lined with fruit trees?’ echoed around me.

I’m not one to stand around talking for too long without action so I reached out to a friend (Michael Green, a well connected journalist/activist in Melbourne) to help get a project going (B). We wrote an email about our idea of making a garden on public space with the community that uses that space. We asked for expressions of interest from people who wanted to get involved, for spaces that might be suitable for this type of project, communities that wanted to foster this type of activity, and anyone that might have skills they would like to donate to the project. We also encouraged people receiving the email to pass it on.
The email was circulated widely. Within a few days 15 people came forward to be involved in the project, three sites and communities were nominated, and countless leads on skill sharing offered. I was humbled by this community that had come forward and identified itself as wanting to do something constructive, instead of just dream up ideas. It felt already that this project had its own momentum.

I invited all of those people who had identified themselves as wanting to be involved in Reclaim the Curb to a meeting in my lounge room. Needless to say we hardly had enough room, let alone seats. During this first meeting we were able to start face to face interactions with others. Of course many of the people knew each other, having been involved with other sustainability and activist type activities. We agreed on a site and community where we would test this idea out, and we agreed on the loose framework of asking for forgiveness rather than permission. After the meeting a short manifesto of how and why we operate was written and a website was developed (D).

The site we had agreed upon was a narrow medium strip on a sunny, quiet street in Northcote, in Melbourne's inner north. The community was already highly active together with weekly 'driveway drinks' a regular activity connecting those who lived in the area. The driver for the project was Michael Gourlay, the managing director for Cultivating Community. He was a passionate, knowledgeable, activist and nurturer. He was delighted to foster the project’s first test site and eager to push the boundaries of what could be done (E).

In the lead up to the first working bee for Reclaim the Curb a landscape architect came forward to donate his time to help give direction to the site works. He was also able to help construct the sharing shed where neighbours could place excess backyard produce to share with others. Michael Gourlay was an excellent champion for this project, mobilising the community and investing time and energy into the building and maintenance of the site. After the site was finished it was featured in the bicycle tour of urban agricultural activities in the Darebin Council area as part of the Sustainable Living Festival. The bicycle tour was a sell out, and Michael Gourlay informally presented the process of the community making this garden happen (F).
Despite the Council celebrating the garden in its public sustainability program, they were disgruntled over the sharing shed structure. The community was requested to remove it from public property. It now sits on Michael Gourlay’s driveway, on the very edge of his property so the street’s residents can still use it. Although this doesn’t sit within the Council guidelines of where structures can be placed on private properties, the Council has agreed to turn a blind eye to this lack of compliance, for the sake of the community. (H).

After the first project was completed, the group was approached by more communities that wanted to reclaim the space around them. Most groups were able to mobilise themselves and design the space and hold a working bee to build the garden. It was interesting because once the first site was photographed and documented on the blog, it was like an invitation or a permission slip was granted to all those other people wanting to do the same (I).

To continue the momentum of the project and empower more groups to reclaim their spaces, an annual competition was started. Through donations of money, skills through workshops and supplies, the competition was designed to spread the idea of Reclaim the Curb and give a leg up to any communities were struggling to make it happen themselves. The competition ran for two years and was instrumental in establishing six community gardens.

Although the competition has stopped and the original group dispersed, many of the gardens continue to be maintained and grown. One of the more significant outcomes of this project was the development of agency in one of the winners of the competition, Paul Sheehan. His garden was so admired by his street and wider community that he went on to be a fundamental advocate for community contributions in his Council’s public spaces policy.
Project: Sharing Abundance

KEY

SU Sustainability
AC Activism
UA Urban Agriculture
FP Fostering Participation
RA Realising Agency
GC Generating Community

<table>
<thead>
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3.6.3 Model for Sharing Abundance

See Model above.

The final project in this body of work is Sharing Abundance. Using the model, I have been able to trace back the project’s evolution and unpack some of the significant events which happened during the project and which have helped develop my practice.

Beginning at the centre of the spiral, the project was developed in response to some of the feedback received from The Foraging Commons project media coverage. This type of activity, picking fruit from people’s private property (with permission) and sharing it with the community, was an activity I was already familiar having done it as a child with my grandparents and doing it with my own children. It’s an incredibly liberating process picking fruit which can be eaten right there and then, bursting with taste of the season. I loved watching my young son, who was a notoriously fussy eater, sitting at my feet while I picked fruit, eating til his heart was content. I loved being closer to where my food came from, particularly when I lived in the inner city, and the simple exchange basis on which it could work without the need for money, so moving something of no value and excess to a place of need and thus putting value on it (A).

As my interest in the urban agriculture space began to grow and became known to my friends and colleagues, I received an email recommending I check out an abundance project in the UK. I was inspired by what I saw and began researching around this space, only to find more projects around the UK and Canada. The principle these projects worked on was the rule of thirds. A group of volunteers comes together and harvests a fruiting tree with permission from the tree owner on private property. The fruit harvested in then shared three ways: the owner of the tree, the volunteers, and to community organisations such as a school or aged care facility. I liked the simple framework this project was designed within and equitable handling of food without money. At the time, to my knowledge, there were no projects like this happening in Australia and so I decided to try it out in Melbourne. I started knocking on doors, asking for permission to harvest their trees, conducted letterbox drops, and talking to people about this project I wanted to do.
However, shortly after I commenced I was connected with a community in Castlemaine Victoria that was also running an Abundance project. I made contact with them and was able to set up a highly supportive relationship between people doing similar projects in different places (B).

Through testing the project out in real life I was able to gain experience in running this type of project, iron out some of the issues around equipment and distribution, and meet an incredible bunch of people. What I found interesting about this project was the number of people who wanted to be involved and take the project to their neighbourhoods. This idea inspired me and sat within my ideals of local sustainability fostering (C). After I had conducted a series of harvests myself, I decided to take a step out, develop a guidebook and see if I could expand the project by empowering others to do it too (E–H).

Through the website, social media and my own networks, I was able to reach out and attract six different groups across Melbourne to champion this project in their respective suburbs. Simultaneously I was beginning to collect a catalogue of people who would approach me, usually through the website, with trees that they wanted harvested (I). Once a group was assembled in an area I would post them out a harvesting kit I had compiled with a guide book, promotional postcards and any pieces of equipment I had in excess at that time, such as hessian bags to carry fruit in. I would also connect them with the registered tree owners in their area.

At the beginning, this process worked well and the project was being performed in different areas across Melbourne. However, I soon took a step back from the project to have my second child and with the growth of our family we decided to move to Castlemaine, Victoria. Once I took a step back from the project, those people whom I thought I had empowered with the project seemed to lose their agency as well. In short, harvests stopped happening.

The process of designing and reflecting on this model has provided me with insight into why this project did not continue developing the way it had to that point. I had systematically written down how to conduct the harvests and found people who were willing to run them in their local area. I had given them agency, or I thought I had, through a guidebook.
In retrospect it seems totally ridiculous that the harvests would continue. A guidebook, like a recipe book, sits idle until motivation and desire are unearthed to drive the behaviour. The guidebook is highly technocratic and I realise, now, that I missed the most important part of doing this type of activity, which is the heart to do it. By that I mean the deep desire, the motivation, the willingness to try things, to keep at it, and the ability to draw others to join on the journey with you.

This discovery from the Sharing Abundance project was addressed during the development of this model. The centre of the spiral of this model represents this internal intangible motivations of the practice, unique to me as a designer and necessary for any similar types of projects to be carried out. Without this centre driving the projects, the projects have no purpose.

### 3.7 Applications for Broader Use

I have used the model in two ways: first, to explain the process that I used in my practice and, second, as a reflective tool to identify moments of importance per project so that learnings can be taken from them. However, it is possible that the model can be used in other ways, including informing my future practice and assisting the broader community of practice.

It’s one of those inevitable questions PhD students get that begins to haunt them at social events towards the end of their studies: ‘So what’s your PhD on?’ an innocent person asks. Depending on what day I’ve had, how the last meeting with my supervisor went, and what part of my thesis I was writing, I would either drown them in academic jargon or freak out, whispering something about sustainability. After developing the model to describe my practice, describing my research seemed clearer and more succinct.

In a more formal setting, such as when I give talks and presentations, I am able to use the model to describe my process and each project’s journey, as well as drawing from the broader theoretical area and outcomes of the project. As demonstrated in Chapter 2, there is a broad community of practice with activities happening in both a chaotic and organised ways.
Communicating the complexity of the practice in both specific terms to my projects and helping the audience understand the broader implications can be challenging, and boring! But with the help of the model, my descriptions are more directed and the audience can get a sense of where I am headed. With this framework in place, the model allows me to present the richness of each project with particular attention to the moments of significance. For the audience these examples, which are often awkward and sometimes funny, are now grounded in a context.

This model and supporting discussion grounds my research and helps form a discourse around the various contributions. Due to the low barriers to entry the community of practice can be quite broad and chaotic. However, as discussed in Chapter 2, those activities grounded in the theoretical framework I have identified are part of a community of changemakers. This community of practice is able to use this model as a tool to help them reflect on their own practice, which in turn could help inform future activities. For those contributions which are not necessarily grounded in theory, but which are part of the broader ‘movement’, this model can act as an invitation to begin to add direction to their practice and make their activities more meaningful.

When presenting this model to existing members of my community of practice there was a combined sense of relief and ‘aha’ moments. The sense of relief from those with practices that are actively trying to bring about change, that they are on the right track, that their projects do have meaning. ‘Aha’ moments were from projects that are more exploratory in nature. They are inherently interested in exploring different areas of change and not necessarily tied to a particular cause or outcome. They were excited about the potential the model showed them. For example, if the project was really powerful in demonstrating sustainability initiatives but wanted to generate community, the model suggests a pathway and potential relationship to explore to get there.

After discussing the model with a few members of my community of practice, I came to speculate: how far reaching could this model be? It could be interesting to test out whether I could replace the ‘urban agriculture’ component, which makes this model particular to this practice, and replace it with ‘fashion’ or ‘software development’ if it would still be applicable. Reflecting on my experience with The Clothing Exchange, I think the model would have broad potential.
3.8 Conclusion

As part of the reflective process, in order to build a greater understanding of my methodology and to produce an explanation of it, a model has been created. The process of creating a model has allowed me to develop as a practitioner, progressing from the guided to becoming a guide. Further to this, the process of making a model reinforced to me as a practitioner the methodology I engage with, as this too was a form of iterative rapid prototyping.

The Model incorporates four components I have identified through this reflective process as being integral to my practice and how the projects have developed. They are:

- Methodology
- Theoretical Frameworks.
- Practice Outcomes.
- Matters of the heart.

Using these four components I have created a model that charts the journey of my practice on a project level. I have been able to use the model as a framework for each project, which draws out different moments of significance. Through this process the model has acted as a type of security blanket, grounding my experiences with theory and outcomes. Conversely, it has also helped me to identify project realisations and where I will take this practice into the future.
Conclusion

This body of work, as a reflective practice, has identified two epistemological findings. These are:

1. The identification of two new categories in which urban agriculture activities (grass roots activities and online applications) occur; and

2. The specific methodology I have distilled unique to my practice, but able to be explored and tested by others specifically through the model that I created to support this reflective process.

Throughout this discussion I explored the theoretical frameworks that locate and support my practice within knowledge areas, and the practice outcomes that give the process of exploration meaning.

Reflecting on process and outcomes to distill findings creates two triads – triangular forms consisting of three points, joined symmetrically by a theme. These two triads form the basis of a model of my practice.

Guiding the explorer through the model is a spiral form that begins in the centre, at a point I call Matters of the Heart. This is the engine room of creativity, fueled by passion, drive, desire and curiosity, that drives projects.

The points of intersection between the spiral, and the lines that connect the points of the twin triads, are literally reflection points, encouraging pause and contemplation, identification of significant moments and insights. They help inform the next step, and whether to continue the journey outwards across the spiral to face the public, or to retreat inwards for more personal reflection.

The process of creating the model has helped me gain further understanding of my practice. By taking a step back, and distilling my practice critically and graphically, the fundamental
elements are identified. Now the model offers both a starting point and end point for me to revisit this body of work, or when I need to discuss this type of practice with others.

Most importantly, the model opened a different way for me to reflect on my practice, which confirmed the way that I work as a design practitioner and the key insights gained from my practice. This has given me the grounding, a home base perhaps, from which future expeditions can be launched.

**Reflection on Method**
The methodology I have engaged with is a highly iterative and heavily informed from service design thinking. I have distilled the methodology into six steps. They are:

1. Identification of a space to explore – can be physical, ideological, practical, or any combination of these.

2. Research-like projects – usually through observation, but can be through experience in taking part, or through conversation.

3. Designing a system – using the tools and techniques I have at my disposal I design a simple system.

4. Test it out – physically go into the field and test it out by making it happen.

5. Reflect on successes, opportunities etc – this is done both internally and through external feedback.

Weave the feedback into the project to improve it.

Through the process of identifying these steps I realised two things. First, that my practice is a form of rapid prototyping where I quickly refine an idea, and test it out in real life circumstances. The feedback generated by this experience is then woven back into the design development phase to improve the project. Second, these steps are like a recipe which, similar to many service design methodologies I reviewed, is highly technocratic and doesn’t really give any meaningful insights into the practice.
The development of a model was crucial in addressing this shortfall of the methodology. Within the model I was able to incorporate the theoretical framework and practice outcomes which grounds the projects, and most crucially the internal drivers of the practice. I tested the model by applying it to each of the three projects that contribute to this body of work.

I found that the model offers the extra insight required to visually communicate the layered meaning behind the projects and the continual iterative process of physically delivering this type of work.

**Realisations**

Reflective practice, using both reflective research and reflection-in-action was the method I used to draw out the realisations from this body of work.

Building upon my experience with The Clothing Exchange and my master’s research into ethical consumer behaviour and decision making, I was aware of the tensions between ideology and practice within the sustainability movement. I also understood that to make a meaningful impact, sustainability could not be front and centre of the message. Highlighting the fun, social side of the practice meant I could broaden the appeal of the projects and engage people. I wanted to make my practice more interesting than separating your paper from your plastics.

What I learnt through the reflective practice was that the process I was engaging with was very much in line with the MAP model for organising social movements, as outlined in Moyer’s book, *Doing Democracy* (2001). Further to making the projects fun and social, I was also encouraging people to gain experiences that have resonance and meaning for them. I encourage people to harvest fruit from curbsides, I take groups of people into backyards to harvest fruit and share it among their communities, and I plot events for a whole street to come together to make a garden they can all enjoy. These activities are already closely related to people’s intrinsic ideals for the type of community they want to be part of – trusting, sharing, neighbourly. By incorporating these closely held cultural ideals, through the projects I was able to make pro environmental behaviour enjoyable, and not something involving giving up or doing without.
The timing of the projects was perfect. Top–down policy driven change for climate mitigation and adaptation had lost its momentum, making the season ripe for grassroots activities. In particular, the time was right for grassroots activities that gave permission for individuals to be autonomous, to take control of what they could around them, and get involved in something constructive. In effect, I was giving them permission to not seek permission and break a few rules.

The reflective practice grounded my projects in a theoretical framework which fed into the iterative processes I engage with as a practitioner. I am constantly testing ideas and adaptations of ideas, usually in real life circumstances. Being able to weave in understandings gained from theory and broader areas of knowledge means the iterative process I engage with is more meaningful. For example, I am able to gain an insight into changemaking through Holling’s theories of panarchy. I then use that understanding in changemaking behaviour by amplifying the Reclaim the Curb project, starting a statewide competition. The competition then goes on to foster three gardens each year for two years. One of the winners, Paul Sheehan from a suburb in Melbourne, then goes on to fundamentally contribute to his Council’s open spaces guidelines for community. These are the nested cycles of Holling’s theory of panarchy, colliding and intertwining before my eyes, creating the potential for new system patterns to emerge. It makes for better viewing than TV.

In a similar vein, I was able to identify two categories of urban agriculture that were not covered in a recent report by the Design Trust for Public Space in New York. The two categories I added were grassroots activities, and online applications.

Despite the excitement of seeing larger system changes taking shape, the overall realisation of this body of work for me is the need for an ideologically neutral, ethical and moral framework around human behaviour, with particular focus on environmental behaviour, that can be embedded in the design process. The notion of acting civically to enable meaningful change to happen is crucial for its longevity, and its ability to remain relevant to a broad group of people.
This realisation feeds back into the original design of the projects where I wanted the activities to be more interesting than separating paper from your plastics. The activities focused on the human desire for being together, and I was able to connect with tightly held cultural values of community. The journey of this reflective practice, like the practice itself, is highly iterative; and like a spiral, it turns, moves, replicates and builds new layers upon old ones.

**My Practice: Future Work**

It’s an exciting time when a group of projects you have been a part of in the field, and experienced again and again through reflection, come to an end.

I started this body of work with The Foraging Commons when I was heavily pregnant with my first child. When I reflect on the process of mapping those streets in Newcastle, my train of thought around boundaries and sharing is quickly sidelined by the weight of my expansive belly and the discomfort in my pelvis!

The projects went on, and so did I. It wasn’t until a few years later and another child that I took a step back from this work to reflect on the journey that has been. Reflective practice in a PhD environment, like any moments of stress, allows for growth and renewal. Drawing to the end of this process I was excited at the idea of walking away, closing the door on a journey in order to be open for something new. At times I had become bored, remembering my pregnant self, reviewing the photographs of harvest events and watching my son grow up.

However, now that I’m here, at the end, the possibility for renewal has energised me. What will the future look like?

Well, much the same as it’s always been. I’m keen to revisit The Foraging Commons, a project which, despite being reason for all the subsequent projects, has very much been neglected for a few years. I believe now, having gone through this reflective practice, I have a lot of knowledge and skill to weave back into it, to see how it may evolve in a new life setting.
For example, I would like to explore how it would be received in regional areas instead of in a metropolis, as it was in its first incarnation. I want to explore whether the popularisation of the sharing economy has changed the way people feel about informal sharing, with particular reference to food on or over public space. Finally, I am interested in revisiting the community that existed around public food mapping and how it has changed and evolved.

In contrast to this investigation and much of this body of work, I’m interested to see how a commercial element could sit within the methodology I have distilled. Could I, as a practitioner, adopt a commercial element as part of my projects, which to this point have operated largely outside the monetary system? What would this look like? Would other areas such as activism have to experience too much of a compromise and therefore not be relevant or meaningful anymore?

Coming to the end of this reflective journey, empowered to both revisit the beginning again and to continually ask investigative questions, reinforces the power of reflective practice.
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Appendices
Appendix A

Email Correspondence from a member of the Milson Community Garden, received 22 November 2012, the day after an article mentioned The Foraging Commons project appeared in the Sun–Herald.

Note: Names of people have been changed.

Email #1

Yesterday the Sun–Herald newspaper published your picture and an article “Fresh food takes root in the cities” together with a map covering North Sydney/Kirribilli/Milsons Point. I notice that you posed for your photograph in our Milson Community Garden.

We are the volunteers who built and work in the garden were very, very upset by this inaccurate article, fearing that all our hard work – every day of every week – will be destroyed by “larcenous” plundering the garden.

It was implied in the article that free fruit and vegetables are available from the Milson Community Garden in Milson Park. Indeed, yesterday afternoon many people came to our garden expecting to harvest from it.

In the Milson Community Garden, we work as a collective and we donate TIME and MONEY for the privilege. No one can share in our harvest without showing a commitment to the garden. This commitment is initially demonstrated by working for at least four hours per week over three weeks each month and then also showing a continued commitment. On the first three Sundays of volunteering, if there are sufficient herbs, then a modest bunch can be taken from our collective bunch. When we have a huge harvest we share it with local residents who live around the garden and who are our security guardians. The rule of the garden is “No work, no harvest”.

If you had bothered to look at our LARGE notice board on the garden fence and our second notice board on the garden shed you would have known that this garden is not a free food source for scrumbers. Details of garden contacts are displayed, yet you did not care to contact
anyone to verify your information. The lack of courtesy is not appreciated.

The volunteers of the Milsom Community Garden demand that you correct this inaccurate information. Your information is likely to spell the end of the Community Garden, a garden that was built from the ground up with our bare hands. Volunteers are highly unlikely to continue a commitment if the fruits of their labours are stolen from them.

It is a real shame that you put together this article without consulting anyone from the garden. I sincerely hope that all of my time, and the time of all of the other volunteers, has not been in vein.

Why should I continue to donate my TIME and MONEY for people like yourself to reap all of the benefits.

We would love you, and others, to come and work in the garden... and the invitation is open to you and anyone else. However, it is not open for you just to come and pick fruit and vegetables.

I hope that you:

1) Remove the garden from your app

2) Post on your blog an apology AND correction

3) Print a correction within the Sun Herald

4) Approve all comments on your blog so that others are aware of your mis-information

Looking forward to your response.

Mark
My Response

Date: 22/11/2010

Mark, Bev and Fiona,

I appreciate the time you have taken to get in contact with me through my website, my email and contacting my family directly. As you may of been informed I am currently overseas until 3rd December.

I have posted a reply to your comments (all of which have been approved and are on the site) as a new post to draw attention to your concerns and to address them in a polite manner.

I am really troubled that the article caused such a reaction in both people thinking that they could come down to the garden and harvest without commitment and to your interpretations of the published piece.

To clarify, it wasn’t my intention to cause any bad publicity for your garden or your organisation. I have re–read the article several times and I’m still unsure why it has been interpreted the way that it obviously has. Nor do I believe the journalist intend this either. I have not been misquoted in the article, and my interpretation of the quotes from me, I believe, would hopefully benefit the community not hinder it. On my site and on the map page itself I clearly state what I believe ‘sharing’ to be – as in taking some and giving some. Should the map not be used in the way it was intended then unfortunately it is out of my control. But I can actively publicize my motivations for developing this map (which I do without funding or any type of external financial support) and hope that those who choose to use it understand and respect the idea. Once the new platform on the smart phone is finalised it will be available for free for all to use.

Should you want to remove the Community Garden site from the map, you are free to do so. The map is open to editing from the public. Although this would be a shame as I have received countless emails from people from other community gardens wanting to map theirs. However based on the bad publicity you have received I guess I can understand your motivations.
As I mentioned I am overseas until the 3rd December. Should you want to meet with me to discuss your grievances further I am happy to discuss them then. For further contact please use this email address (and not my family) and I will endeavor to respond to your messages whilst I am abroad.

Kind regards

Juliette

Response from the member Milson Community Garden

Email #2

Date: 22/11/2010

Juliette,

Thanks for taking the time to respond.

Whilst I can’t speak for Bev and Fiona personally, I believe that the following aspects of the article, when combined, point markedly to the impression that the Community Garden is free to pick from.

1) Plotting the garden on the published map.

2) The line “Volunteer fresh-food enthusiasts have plotted the places they pick their apples, tear their basil, and gather all manner of free, in-season, locally grown produce.”

3) The line “It tastes so much better, and if you pick respectfully, community gardening can alleviate pressure on our food systems.”

This last line, especially with respect to the fact that the MPCG is in fact labelled a “Community Garden,” is particularly distressing for all of us involved.
Moreover, the proof is in the pudding, in that numerous people (some with article in hand) came down on Sunday to see what food was on offer for them to pick and take home.

With regards to point 2 above, I would be interested to know which “volunteer fresh-food enthusiast” was the person who plotted our garden on your map. I can assure you that it wasn’t Carole or Jan, and it definitely wasn’t myself.

In addition to this, our food isn’t “free” as outlined in our initial responses to your article below.

We contribute money each week to buy the plants, seeds, fertilisers etc and then share in the harvest on a Sunday.

Whilst we can’t, and never intend to, control who enters the garden, up until this point we have never had a problem with people taking stuff from the garden.

It is a very thin veil that you cloak yourself in with regards to your statement that if “the map not be used in the way it was intended then unfortunately it is out of my control”

Similarly to all of those businesses (think Napster and other file and torrent sharing sites) that are currently being prosecuted for enabling illegal behaviour, you too have a responsibility (if you believe it only to be a moral one) to ensure that the information that you publish is accurate and do everything you can to reduce the risk it will be misunderstood and used for unintended purposes.

Your article has had a wide-ranging and lasting impact on the Community Garden, as well as on the moral of the volunteers.

I imagine that both Bev and Fiona will want the garden removed from your map, however, I will leave that to them to decide.

Regards,

Mark
My response

Date: 22/11/2010

Hi Mark

Thanks for your response.

As I said before I understand your concern but the quotes you have pulled from the article I did not write. I was not involved in the researching or writing for this article. I was approached by the journalist and agreed to be interviewed. Those concerns you highlighted below should be taken up with the journalist not with me.

The examples you highlighted below with online sharing sites are illegal activities because they are facilitating the ‘sharing’ of IP that wasn’t meant for this purpose. The maps I have created are sharing are made up of IP that has been readily shared by people giving up their time to map the area. The locations that have been plotted are on public land.

For the milson’s park garden I have included a link to the site of the garden so anyone who is using the site has the ability to see for themselves what is involved in this particular community, the effort that has gone it and how to become involved in the future.

As I said before, the maps are open for public collaboration so should you want it removed please do so.

Kind regards
Email I sent immediately afterwards to Tosh, my beloved.

Date: 22/11/2010

i’ve really lost all the wind in my sails.

i want to curl up under a rock and cry.

they went over to my parents house and had a go at dad for my project. just got an email from mum. that address isn’t listed anywhere – and has nothing to do with me. I can only imagine that they accessed council records. so rude and so invasive.

tell me you bought us a house in castlemaine this morning

Response from Tosh

Date: 22/11/2010

that is so ridiculous. he should be thankful you drew attention to the garden so more can participate. his garden wasn’t ‘harvested’?! people expected to harvest (i.e. people are stupid and can’t read).

can’t believe someone would go to your parent home about this. total loser.
Appendix B

The Foraging Commons
The Foraging Commons is the first projects in this collection of work. This version of the site was designed by SquareWeave, Melbourne and launched in 2012.
Reclaim the Curb

The Reclaim the Curb website is a blog which archives the happenings of the collective as well as contributes to an ongoing conversation around civil disobedience. This website is the main promotional tool, with its supporting social media, to promote the activities of Reclaim the Curb.
**Sharing Abundance**

The Sharing Abundance website is a blog which archives the development of this project, contributes to the ongoing conversation around sharing, and acts as a promotional tool for the project.
Stealing is Sharing is Caring

Mapping Pathways from Angst to Love
[Design interventions to explore a community scale, localised food system]

A project submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Architecture and Design
College of Design and Social Context
RMIT University
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