“The Agri-Cultural Imagination: Present and Future Imaginations of Alternative Agriculture, the Human-non-Human Relationship, and the Impact of Time”

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Abstract

Firstly, this thesis aims to highlight a form of alternative agriculture through an anthropological lens, through an exploration of alternative farming practices, focusing on what is known as Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). Through ethnographic fieldwork carried out over 2 years I learned about the motivations, fears, hopes, imagined presents and futures and ways of seeing the world of those who involve themselves with CSA practices. Secondly, in the broadest sense I want to highlight the role the human imagination plays in constructing our present(s) and future(s). Our imaginations are powerful tools, enabling people to see the present in many different ways, and project themselves into multiple contingent futures. We rely on it to construct ourselves and much of the world around us. And so, I believe for us to understand anything about what it means to be human we must understand how and what we imagine. Thirdly, I discuss the human-non-human relationship, in a general "beyond the human" sense but also with specific reference to plants. While having somewhat of a renaissance in anthropological discourse, there is still a lacuna of knowledge concerned with the relationships we have with the non-humans of this world. An emphasis of much alternative agriculture is the nurturing of the connection between the human and the non-human and CSA is no exception. Thus, CSA makes an excellent opportunity to better understand some aspects of these relationships, particularly in the urban environment. All of this is framed through larger scale issues with a major focus on human induced climate change and its very real effects on the present world but also the myriad of potential future effects the continued acceleration of climate change will have.

Fig.1:. Vive la Révolution

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Introduction

Here Comes the Sun

Sweat rubbed off brow, dirt wiped off hands. One box of bright colours, tomatoes. Another box, courgettes. Another, turnips. Then came the cucumbers, the scallions, and the kohlrabi.

Cars parked up, boots on, reusable bags in hand.

This was the second week we were trying out our new system for share collection. The members of the farm had between 11am and 2pm today to pick up their shares of fruit and vegetables. We had been having issues with member collection turnout. It had been around 50% the last few months and when people did show up it was in drips and drabs. But from what I could see coming down the farm driveway this new allotted time slot seemed to be just the trick. I'd been volunteering at the farm for about 6 months and this was the first time I had seen a group of people this large at the farm. The place had plenty of life in it but today the farm felt truly alive. After coming by the front gate and walking up the driveway earlier that morning I had situated myself inside our 40-foot shipping container. The Container acted as both our office and staging area for preparing the produce for collection. Standing by crates full of vegetables I looked at all the new faces of both long-term members and the latest additions. I had met a handful throughout the previous months but there were many I had never and would not see again. Most of them were just names on a page and many would remain just that. The head farmer, Mia, wasn't here today, she had had to go in early to her other job in Dublin City. Working on a community farm doesn't exactly pay well. This day's operation was left up to Niamh and myself. Niamh would run admin and if we ran low on any particular fruit or vegetable I would go collect some more. I had arrived at the farm around 10am that morning, Niamh had arrived earlier and so the container was already open with crates of produce spilling out of its door into the sunshine. We did our last checks to make sure we had everything we needed for the members. We were ready.

These "Harvest" days as they were informally known as were always my favourite. The actual harvest days were the day before when we would go out and gather up all the produce for that week's shares. There was always a sense of excitement on the Saturday mornings. After lugging out all the crates of fruit and vegetables from the Container into the, if we we're lucky, sunny weather I would sit inside or

stand looking down the driveway waiting for the first of the members to arrive to collect their share. Admittedly, the part of the day I most enjoyed was when we would run out of a particular food, be it a head of lettuce, a swede, or a handful of French Beans, I would get to run off crate in hand to collect some more to make sure we kept enough at the "Container" for the flow of bags wide open awaiting their share of that week's harvest. This was unlike a day during the winter months in which I had started my tenure as a volunteer at the farm. During those initial few months it was primarily Mia, Cody and myself running the show. Come rain or shine, we would tend to the needs of the farm. As I had joined during the winter months, it was mostly rain. I vividly remember the feeling of the lashing rain pelting down as the wind attempted to foil our work to place a large quilted plastic sheet over a freshly planted plot so as to protect the plants from the elements and the rabbits who might stop by for a snack. It was hard work for only three people without the elements railing against you but we managed to keep the farm ticking over until additional volunteers could spend a day helping out. But through it all we managed to have fun and the work itself would leave me with a sense of pride.

From Soil, Came Food

At risk of painting an idyllic rose-tinted picture this afternoon in mid-August was a tangible example of the farm living up to its promise as a hub for not only growing food but as a place of community. Groups of people, tea and coffee in hand, laughing and chatting about their plans for the weekend after picking up their share of the produce while children weaved in between them chasing each other and stopping to ogle brightly coloured tomatoes. On a day like this the work we had all put in over the last few months felt worth it. It was inspiring. They say that often when anthropologists are engaged in ethnography we have a tendency to transition from simply being observers to becoming part of a community to becoming activists on behalf of that community. I am no different. I am sure most will relate but these people who began as 'research participants' in a doctoral research project became my friends. The field site of study became the farm that I spent countless hours on, tending to. It's what made those moments on that mid-August day bittersweet. I was witnessing the great things that a small group of dedicated and passionate people can achieve but I couldn't stop asking myself could a project like this survive? It hadn't taken long to notice that the CSA was struggling. It seemed to always be in a constant state of difficulty, one wrong move and it would tip over the edge. This didn't require great anthropological insight either, the precarity of the farm was openly talked about in some respects, it had been one of the first things I was told when I showed up at the farm to have a look back in 2018. It is something I would be reminded about every once in a while too either by someone mentioning that we probably didn't have enough money to keep going, or by simply observing the fact that over the months

I volunteered at the farm the paid hours of the head farmer were reduced. But I am getting ahead of myself.

Fig.2: Learning to harvest leeks

Before beginning this research project I never really thought of myself as having an interest in growing food. I certainly had an interest in eating it but I had never put much thought into where the food we buy in our supermarkets actually came from. Like most of us I was aware of the organic movement and the push towards eating more local produce, both things I had been told were nothing but farces years before by some of those around me. But I hadn't sat down with the people who actually did the growing and ask them what was this whole food growing about? It was during my master's that I first came into contact with people who were familiar with growing their own food either to sell or simply for personal use. I had been writing about peatland conservation in Ireland particularly in the Co. Kildare and Co. Offaly region. It was rather indirect contact too, I overheard one of the workers at a charitable organisation I was doing fieldwork at mention peat moss. Peat moss or sphagnum moss as it is also known is a dark brown material made up of decomposing organic material that grows on boggy land. It is incredibly water absorbent making it a useful additive to certain type of sandy and clay soils to help retain moisture. It's also considered an organic and more natural method of improving soil compared to artificial fertilizers. While my primary interest was not related to peat moss I came across

it enough in conversation for it to stick in my mind so much so that when my master's was done and dusted I was still thinking about the spongy greeny-brown stuff. During this time peat moss was considered by many in the peatland industry to be their saving grace and to those that wished to protect the peatlands. It was a somewhat acceptable compromise to harvest it instead of the dwindling peat supplies. Only a few years later I assume this is still the case. Much like my master's, my initial plan for a PhD had been about the soil. And in many ways it still is about soil. Without it we wouldn't have any edible plants not until recently technological advances anyway. In Ireland we believe that our legendary dairy industry is powered by the quality of the grass grown here, which it is, but that grass would not exist if it were not for the dirt beneath it. Inevitably, reading and listening to people talk about peat moss and its benefits led me to read about farming. Peat moss led me to soil, soil led me to plants. Agriculture is not something I intimately grew up with. I was born Dublin and have lived in one or another of its sprawling suburbs for the entirety of my life. I'm a 'townie' through and through. The closest I ever came to spending a significant amount of time on a farm of any description before undertaking this fieldwork was the odd school trip. We would be brought to working farms that would bring groups of children on tours to show them the cows, sheep, and chickens and let them sit in the tractor. I knew, like many urbanites how food was produced, where the bread, fruit, vegetables and meat on the shop shelves came from. Although this is mainly through narratives that the shops themselves decide to tell their customers from stories of small family run jam producers to pictures of beaming farmers standing in a field somewhere in the Midlands surrounded by their cattle. Not that these are not true but these narratives have a vested interest, some might say, in keeping the whole truth a little murky. It was these stories and pictures in the supermarkets that I was most familiar with. I was aware of the many alternative approaches that many people are part of such as the organic movement and locavore initiatives, but they were not what informed my understanding of the relationship between humans and food in Ireland. Until I fell face first into the world of urban/suburban agriculture.

At the beginning of my fieldwork I had a feeling I had missed something of a golden age of urban farming in Dublin. There were still quite a few places in operation but a number of projects and allotments had been closing down for one reason or another especially those that I thought looked particularly interesting to my research. My feeling was not far off the truth as Moore et al, observed low CSA numbers in Ireland which they attributing to a number of factors 'including the relative strength of other aspects of the AAFNs, especially farmers' markets, and a desire by all parties to avoid displacement, the prominence of allotmenteering and the home gardening movement called GIY; the recession, in which Ireland suffered significantly from the resulting austerity, with a decline in discretionary spending organic food' (2014, 138). In May 2018 I caught wind of a new project attempting to set up somewhere in Dublin and was looking for somewhere to call home. The man behind the plan had been responsible for a number of successful projects in the city, the largest of which

had been shut down the city authorities on the claim of fire safety. I met him in a café in South Dublin on a bright May morning right when he was in the middle of planning his next big thing. As he described the idea, 'PLOT', a community focused urban farm that would produce 100s of kilos of fruit and vegetables alongside exotic foods such as Shitake mushrooms and that all of this would be down in shipping containers using hydroponic and aquaponics methods. I became increasingly excited about the prospect of being able to be involved in such as project from the beginning. I was sold. I left that meeting thinking this sounded brilliant and what could possibly go wrong? It was now September 2018. Months had gone by and there had been no sign that the project was progressing. Although I had been speaking with other people and visiting other potential field sites I had been banking, perhaps naively, on 'PLOT'. I was beginning to worry but as we all know fieldwork never goes the way you think it will. It would not be till mid-October that I would speak again with PLOT-Man face to face at a pub quiz, a pub quiz which the team I was on won by the way. This would also be the last time I would speak with PLOT-Man in person. Up until this point I had been visiting a number of different potential field sites in and around Dublin, I had become fascinated with the idea of growing and raising food somewhere that was not awash with expansive green fields but squashed into small spaces surrounded by concrete and tarmac. As is part of the ethnographic enterprise there were those who could not be convinced I was legitimate or simply weren't interested in the idea of me hanging around annoying them. On one occasion after being on the phone and agreeing to meet someone at their farm I showed up at the front gate. Peering through the metal gate it didn't look like anyone was home. I called the person I was supposed to meet and asked if I had shown up at the wrong time but they acted as though they'd never heard of me. I do not believe, or at least I hope, that this is not a unique experience to me. Maybe it was something I said. However, one of the other places I had visited only a couple of weeks before the pub quiz had been a suburban CSA which would, 8 months later in February 2019, become my primary field site. After my initial visit there and after speaking with the then farmer of the land, Ken, the CSA had been rolling around in my mind. Community Supported Agriculture was not something I was at all familiar with at the time, I didn't even know that CSA stood for "Community Supported Agriculture." In some ways it was the exact opposite of PLOT-Man's ideas. The CSA was not employing novel technological solutions to growing food like hydro and aquaponics. The place didn't even have electricity[1]. There were no computers and only a handful of battery-powered power tools. This place relied on, and I do mean this literally, blood, sweat and sometimes tears. Everything that could be done by hand was and even the things that couldn't we found a way. We would scavenge almost everything we used, from wooden transport pallets that we found in skips or behind shops to plastic wire ties that we would remove from election posters left on lamp posts after an election. Rarely was anything 'new' when it arrived on the farm.

[1] Although there was plenty of electricity flowing above our heads in the shape of a large electrical pylon.

When I showed up on the community farm in February I had a lot to learn. Much like many an anthropologist before me when I washed up on that shore, learn I did. And if I'm being perfectly honest, there's still plenty I'm a bit fuzzy on. I would joke with my research participants that when I started I didn't know one end of a leek from the other and while, in fact, I do know one end of a leek from the other there was plenty about the leek and its many human and non-human cohorts on the farm that I didn't know. And so I spent the two years and some change learning all about leeks. Learning how to sow seeds and transfer seedlings into the ground at the right depth and spacing depending the on the plant. Dragging tyres and large sheets of plastic from one plot to another to kill off weeds and stop grass from growing. Training tomato plants to grow upwards using string and wire. Building shelving units and tables out of salvaged pallets for the freshly sowed seeds. Digging holes in the rain just to see them fill up with water, watering plants in the summer to see them dry and shrivel up faster than expected. Throughout these experiences there was a core group of people I came to know very well whom I will introduce later in this chapter. Due to the transitory nature of the CSA there were others too who found their way to the farm for one reason or another. This ethnographic piece is as much their story as it is mine. So what is this thesis about? It is about urban farming. It is about a small community who believe in a way of growing food and growing a community that did not fit with the urban mainstream. It is about their quest for a 'sustainable' alternative. It is about the precarity they found themselves in pursuit of their alterity. It is about the relationships between the humans and the non-humans of the CSA. It is their story, or at least a small part of it that I was there to experience with them, one that continues as I write this.

Urban Growing in Dublin & the Dublin – Kildare Border

This may come as a surprise but Ireland has quite a long and rich history of urban food production. Generally it is the food powerhouse that is rural farming in the country that overshadows what went on and to some extent still does in the larger towns and cities. Growing food, or raising it, has always been a part of urban life. It has had its peaks and troughs in terms of popularity but it has never gone away. And I would contend that although I may have missed somewhat of a golden age there is another just around the corner but what that will look like I do not know. As I have noted I did not grow up around farms or anything close to the sort but my father's side of the family did. Not a farm but what my grandparents and great grandparents did have was a large back garden at the rear of their multi-generational house just outside the centre of Dublin City. The house built by the British government in the 1910s and 1920s for Irish soldiers who fought in the First World War was bought by my great grandfather and his family after he returned from the Somme. From this large garden the family grew

a variety of vegetables and fruits from the staples of potato and cabbage to strawberries in the summer. Unfortunately the garden is no longer used to grow anything traditionally considered edible, like many of the neighbours the garden is for the growing of flowers and deck chairs on the patio. In recent years, as new families have moved into the area I've noticed the odd raised bed or young berry tree but there are still far more barbeques than broccoli beds. While it would seem that for mainstream society the idea of growing your own food in your back garden has lost its appeal there has been a resurgence in urban community growing, whether that been shared community gardens or private networks of individual agriculturalists, horticulturalists and permaculturalists, growing everything from edible flowers to beer hops.

There is a heritage of large scale farming in Dublin City albeit those particular fields have been covered in housing estates, apartment blocks and business firms save a few patches. One case that I think is worth sharing with you is that of Michael Flanagan or Alderman Michael Flanagan as he would become known after his appointment in the 1890s until his death in 1931. He also happened to be WT Cosgrave's father-in-law. Although connected to what would become the political dynasty of the Cosgraves, Flanagan had created his own empire in the realm of food production. He was, for a time, the man responsible for producing almost all of the vegetables grown for sale in Dublin. He operated on an industrial scale that according to one of his descendants Mark Humphreys, "he had acquired so much land in the area that apparently Dublin Corporation *stopped* him from buying any more". (Humphreys, n.d.) His workers and land produced so much food that it is reported he was able to not only grow enough to feed all of Dublin and its growing population but he also managed to export to both the United Kingdom as well as farther onto the European continent. In memory of Alderman Michael Flanagan there now sits a community garden in Rialto on the South side of Dublin City named in his honour, 'Flanagan's Fields Community Garden'. It even sits where once grew Flanagan's vegetables as did where the buildings and roads are now built in the surrounding area. The mid and late 20th century might have seen the idea of growing your own food lose popularity due to its association with being poor. But the tradition of growing food in the city never went away at least not for long. The vestiges of a rich urban agricultural history live on today.

Calling them vestiges is quite harsh because in reality, urban agriculture in its many forms is still common place in and around the city. Generally consisting of individuals working on their own private plots or as part of an allotment site. But there are other larger community gardens and the odd commercially focused urban farm. There is even a second CSA in Dublin albeit not in the city or in a town for that matter but in one of the remaining rural areas of Dublin county. It is these projects, and the ones they inspire, that constitute what is looking like what will become the next 'golden age' of

urban farming in and around the city. It is, however, the individual urban agriculturalist that has seen the most recent boom in popularity and even as I write this introduction amidst the current Covid-19 crisis, the calls for the increased growing of food at home are becoming louder. While the sounding horn for growing more locally, be that in ones back garden or down the road in a community plot, may have been somewhat quieter in the last few decades, it has been gradually garnering more supporters and in more recent times the pace of gathering support has quickened. The motivations behind this support, or at the least the rhetoric itself, is not dissimilar to that of the past. Growing food close by or by yourself and one's community is about food security. It is about creating and fostering a sense of community be that geographical or cultural. Rhetoric which is more recent would include that it is about knowing what chemicals or ensuring the lack of chemicals being used to grow the food. It is about reducing one's carbon footprint by growing food instead of buying it from a supermarket that imported it from half-way across the globe. What makes the CSA different, and why I believe it is an interesting case study, is that it takes many of the above concepts and attempts to amalgamate them into one cohesive philosophy. But the truly differentiating factor is that the CSA attempts to do this in opposition to the 'mainstream' of the urban/suburban society it finds itself in. At its core is the belief that there is a better way of doing things, an alternative. Many of the other urban projects attempt, an admittedly tense, co-existence with the neo-liberal capitalist 'environment'. The CSA and those involved in it in both their work with the farm and in their own lives actively work against it even if it is in the smallest of ways.

The People of Feirm Bheag

Allow me to introduce my primary participants. To begin with there was Mia. While the CSA was managed by the head farmer in tandem with a steering committee, Mia was the de-facto leader when it came to the daily running of the farm. Beginning as a volunteer, she had taken the mantle of head farmer from Ken not long before I had begun my research. Mia hadn't had a particularly farming-focus upbringing. Much like many of the volunteers and members, she had become interested in growing her own food as an adult, mainly due to an interest in providing organic, locally-sourced, food for her and Kerry's family. Mia was incredibly hard working, bar the time she spent at her part-time job in Dublin City she spent the majority of her time doing one thing or another at the farm. Mia put the farm above almost all else. An example that comes to mind is early on in my fieldwork when she cut her finger with an axe only to carry on as normal until it became obvious that the cut was more severe than she let on. Another example is even when she was away from the place she would be constantly thinking about it. I know this for two reasons, firstly when she would return from wherever she had been she would have a list of tasks or improvements she would tell me about. Secondly, for the few days I was left in

charge of the farm, or one of the other volunteers would regularly receive texts from her about one thing or another. Although this was probably not helped by the fact that she would be our first port of call if we had a question, which we usually had plenty of when she was away. Mia also was also a very caring person. For example, she had a habit of fretting over how the members felt about the farm and the produce it offered. She would also make a point to let her volunteers know how much they and their on the farm work meant to her, this taking the form of her regular expression of thanks and the offer of a share of produce each weekend. In the summer months Mia also established 'Ice-Cream Fridays' as a way for the volunteers to take a break with well-earned frozen treats. She also on occasion would dye her hair, green being the most notable colour. The majority of my time was spent solely with Mia whom I believe I got on very well with. Mia may have a different opinion. As I've mentioned her work ethic was unmatched and so while we had many conversations these were dispersed between the many jobs needing to be done on the farm. And as it was just the two of us there were a lot of jobs. Kerry, Mia's partner, came to Feirm Bheag at the same time and for the same reason that Mia did, and as Mia took on more and more responsibility at the farm, so did Kerry. By the time I had started working at the farm, Kerry was responsible for much of the accountancy and membership side of the operation. She would also helm the Harvest Day(s) collection stall, greeting the members as they arrived to collect their share. If any passerby stopped to have a look or ask a question it was usually Kerry who would be there to say hello and answer any questions. I sometimes thought of Kerry as the public face of the farm, she was always friendly and I had a great sense of humour that I found myself bouncing off well. Kerry worked full-time in Dublin City so most of the administrative work she did in the evening and would normally one be present at the farm for the Harvest Day on weekends. Amy, a musician above all else, alongside Niamh had begun her alternative farming life in her front garden. She had one of the bubbliest dispositions of anyone at the CSA and was always up for a chat or the occasional coffee run into the nearby town. When she wasn't gigging or working in a local coffee shop, which was owned by some extended family, Amy could generally be found tending to the plants of Feirm Bheag or those of her own garden. Niamh, having previously done a horticultural course when abroad, knew her way around plants in addition to her adeptness in logistics. Trained as a teacher Niamh was on a career break when I met her. During much of my research, she was almost as permanent a fixture on the CSA as Mia or Kerry. When Mia and Kerry were away from the farm it was usually Niamh and I that ensured the farm continued to operate. Then there is Tina, as much a philosopher as anything else. The conversations I would have with Tina would always leave me with more questions than answers. A deep thinker and former civil servant, Tina never seemed settled with mainstream or conventional ways of thinking. She and I had fascinating conversations on a myriad of topics and although she had no formal learning in anthropology she was well versed in many of the foundational ideas of the discipline. When the pandemic lockdowns were in full swing, Tina returned to her home county of Offaly where over the following months she trained as a yoga instructor. Due to the fact that Tina had a particular interest in the non-human world, I thought it apt to loan her Tsing's "Mushroom at the End of the World" which

as of writing this I have yet to get back! Then we have Cody, who for the majority of my time at Feirm Bheag didn't feature, however, he was one of the first people I met and was responsible for training me up the art of planting and harvesting the various fruits and vegetables present at the farm. Originally from Lithuania, Cody was a source of endless entertainment while we were working together, regaling tales of his fishing expeditions all around Ireland and beyond. His manic character led to an unpredictability as to what he would say or do next. On the off occasion, he would bring his slingshot and we would take pot-shots with metal ball bearings at a signpost that ironically stated in bold red lettering "No Shooting".

Fig.3: Mia & Cody

Over the years of my involvement with Feirm Bheag I held a number of roles. Of course, the primary of these was that of a researcher. I became known as the anthropologist, although what was less clear was what an anthropologist exactly was. I routinely had to explain myself and why I had decided on the CSA of all places to carry out my research. However, after the initial months of my research, I fell into other roles as people around the CSA became used to my presence. Of these I was best known as a volunteer and occasional assistant to the head farmer. While I was involved with the preparing, planting and harvesting of the produce, I was also regularly involved in the administration and operational sides of the farm. There were also other odd jobs that I would be pulled into simply due to being around much of the time. For example, one afternoon Mia and I drove around the locale looking for worn out tyres, timber in skips and old wooden pallets no longer in use.

A fact of Feirm Bheag that is hard to ignore is the makeup of the farmers and volunteers, the majority of which identified as female. Not only that but many were members of the LGBTQ+ community. It was a common occurrence that I would be the only male volunteer on the farm. What is traditionally

considered a male dominated area, Feirm Bheag presents an alternative on two fronts. It is no mystery, however, that women have played an integral role in agriculture since its invention. Although a noticeable portion of the contingent of volunteers are members of the LGBTQ+ community, this was not something that was explicitly raised by those participants in relation to their presence at Feirm Bheag. In fact, I learned of this through inference more so than direct conversation or interview and reviewing my field noted confirm this notion. It is for this reason that I believe it best not to engage with this aspect of my participant's lives beyond acknowledging the fact. However there are things to be explored about the fact that the majority of farmers/volunteers identified as female.

As will be mentioned below there were a number of people with whom I spent varying amounts of time with. They were a fee-paying member who collected their share each month or one of the many other volunteers who frequented the farm or both. Some of these people, such as Anne, Lucas and Avery also contributed directly to my research with interviews and general conversation, some of which will be included in the proceeding pages. There also existed a steering committee made up of representatives from both sides, although they did not feature much in the day to day of the farm and generally deferred to Mia and Kerry on most matters. At the head of the whole operation was Mia yet it was Kerry who primarily acted as the go-between for relying messages to the members and steering committee.

Fig.4: Having a Chat on Harvest Day

Theoretical Underpinnings

The theoretical underpinnings of the dissertation are multifaceted. Throughout I will draw on a number of diverse theories with Kohn's (2013) and Descola (2013) among others acting as the foundations. We will encounter Whorf's concept of 'life-worlds' and the role of cultural concepts embedded through language in chapter 4. Concepts of Hope and Hopelessness, and their relationship with the popular imagination, will play a central role in chapter 5. Theory is not only limited to the above however, all theory is connected in one way another and so inclusion of what, at times, may seem as disparate theoretical notes are perhaps not so unrelated. It is my hope that this will be made clear by this piece's conclusion. My aim is not to create some unifying theory applicable to any interpretation of urban community farming, for this is not possible. Instead I intent to build a number of analytical frameworks, each interconnected but also discrete, in hopes of achieving a novel ethnographic interpretation of a particular phenomenon. This is not to say that none of the work herein is inapplicable to other cases but instead takes into account the varied nature of both humanity and the non-humans we share this universe with.

The Chapters and Method

The following dissertation is broken into 4 sections, each representing a season of the year. Beginning with Autumn, the season I began my ethnographic work with the CSA, we will travel through Winter, then Spring and finally, Summer. Each of the sections will offer their own unique vignette based on the multi-temporal sited-ness of the ethnography. Each section representing the change in not only the weather but the place itself and how my thinking developed over the course of my fieldwork. Divided into those 4 sections are 6 distinct yet, of course, overlapping chapters. As to be expected, each chapter brings a new element or elements to the discussion building upon the chapters that came before it.

Winter

Chapter One, "CSA & Food", is our first step. This chapter will take us through what a CSA is, where the concept came from, and how it has been implemented in the context of my primary field site. We will also be introduced to some of the research participants who contributed much to the project. There will also be the inclusion of some other forms of urban and suburban human – non human interactions in the form of other agricultural projects.

Spring

Chapter Two, "Suburbia, Community and Growth". Scarcity and Precarity are both terms that have garnered much popularity in both academic and popular discourse. Experiences and events throughout my ethnographic field work fall into both of these categories. With the CSA existing in a constant state of both 'scarcity' and 'precarity' they are topics that deserve an in-depth analysis in the shape of chapter two.

Chapter Three, "Scarcity, Precarity and Sovereignty". With scarcity and precarity comes hard choices. Sometimes that means even rethinking your core believes to ensure survival. But what price is too much, at what point does just surviving mean losing you closely held ideals. Chapter three deals with the philosophical dilemmas that community projects like the CSA sometimes find themselves in.

Summer

Chapter Four, "Life-World Experience(s)". Chapter four is primarily concerned with the interplay between our life-world experiences and the ways in which they are culturally embedded through cultural concepts and language.

Chapter Five, "Popular Hope & Hopelessness". Chapter five is focused on the "popular imagination" and how a particular present gives rise to particular imagined visions of the future. Here we will look at how concepts of the apocalyptic dystopian present/future influence those in the CSA, and other similar, movements. Hope will provide the philosophical anchor point.

Autumn

Chapter Six, "Beyond the Human and Imagining Alterity". The final chapter, this is the culmination of the dissertation. The strands of 'alterity' have flowed throughout the piece but it is here they will come together. The CSA, and similar endeavours are all to some extent about creating a form of alterity, an alternative.

The goals of this thesis centre on documenting the relationship that emerges between humans and non-humans in the mundanity of everyday life and practice. And so, the methods I employed for the research project were the tried and true methods of the anthropological trade in addition to more novel approaches. The in-depth ethnographic participant observation alongside interviews make up the

primary sources of data. The bulk of the fieldwork took place over a period of 9 months, after a short hiatus a further 4 months of fieldwork was undertaken, after which some remaining fieldwork was cut short due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The fieldwork focused on the CSA where I volunteered for the duration of the research during this time I visited other sites in Ireland but mainly in and around Dublin City, otherwise known as the Greater Dublin Area. These other locations included another CSA, a commercial urban farm, and community gardens. Interviews took place sporadically throughout the first 9 period but mainly taking place near the end or after the initial 9 months. To aid these numerous case studies carried out by peers around the Global North were used as a theoretical and practical corner stone. As is to also be expected, analysis of both historical and contemporary documents are too incorporated.

Alongside the mainstays of ethnographic enquiry, I also employed additional methods for the collection of data. These took the form of photography, soundscaping and, to a lesser extent, video recording. Of these, photography played the largest part, over 300 photos taken over the course of my fieldwork. I recorded a number of soundscapes, with the goal of recording what the CSA's 'voice' sounded like with and almost totally without a human presence (I would be nearby to monitor the equipment I had to present). While I did record some video, I found myself relying primarily on photography for the visual element of the research. Some of the more interesting video I recorded was taken from the level of the ground offering a different perspective of towering humans moving between the plants. To speak further of the photographs themselves, the majority I took were of the various plants found at Feirm Bheag. A number, of course, were of my research participants who consented to their photo being taken. I also took photos of some of the animals around the farm, primarily insects. Other photos were of the landscape surrounding the farm as it changed from green to grey as the land surrounding the farm was converted from unkempt grass and rubble filled fields into constructions sites and buildings. The combination of participant observation and interview, alongside photograph and sound, gives voice to both the human and the non-human. Although a caveat with photography that must be remembered is that it is the human behind the camera that still controls the narrative to a great extent. Yet, after attempting to have a conversation with a leek, photos still offer something to the anthropologist that an interview never could; a peek into non-human experience. These photographs will be found littered throughout this work. Many of the photos I took were, as mentioned, of non-human entities. There is dual reasoning for this, firstly I could speak with human participants and secondly many of the participants were not keen for their photo to be taken each for their own personal reasons.

And so, without further ado, let's get to it.

Literature Review

Before we delve any further it may be useful to first discuss the works that inform the thesis. In doing so I hope to provide the reader a general idea of where my thesis is placed in the field in relation to works other works, both classical and more contemporary. I would like to clearly set out what the aims of this research are, doing so will give justification for the proceeding review, and the subsequent thesis. The aims are three-fold. Firstly, in the broadest sense I am interested in the role the human imagination plays in the constructing of the present(s) and future(s). The imagination (human and potentially non-human) is a powerful tool, it enables us to see the present in many different ways and project into multiple pasts and futures. We rely on it to construct ourselves and much of the world around us. Secondly, I place an emphasis on the human-non-human relationship. While having somewhat of a renaissance in anthropological discourse there is still a lacuna of knowledge concerned with the relationships we have with the non-humans of this world. An intrinsic facet of much alternative agriculture is the nurturing of the connection between the human and the non-human and CSA is no exception. Thus, with the application of theories of animacy and climate change it makes an excellent example to better understand some aspects of these relationships. Thirdly, I wish to simply highlight the CSA form of alternative agriculture through an anthropological lens in the wake of the world we find ourselves living in. And it is with these three aims in mind, and the pre-existing discourses tied to them, that the following literature review, and subsequent thesis, results from. It is worth noting here that some of the literature I draw from in this thesis engages with different contexts and geographies. While the focus of this work is on a specific Irish context, it is useful to compare with sources from differing contexts for two reasons; the CSA movement, and alternative food movements in general, are global in scope and other research done on similar topics elsewhere may help glean insights from the context that this thesis is interested in.

If we first look to community supported agriculture, food, and the motivations carried by people that dictate their choice of what they eat and how they want it to be grown it is Belasco's (2008) interdisciplinary study that formulates the triad by which we govern our food choosing habits. With considerations made for "responsibility", "identity", and "convenience", Belasco places these in a particular order of importance with "responsibility" at the top yet acknowledges that the order he places them in is not what in reality people tend to go with. Rather what he believes we should factor as most important when making food choices. Regardless of this the triad which is brought up in chapter 2 is a useful framework through which to launch an analysis of the make-up of a CSA's community. DeMuynck's analysis of a North American farmers' market offers valuable insights into the potential shortcomings of alternative agricultural movements. While not specifically concerned with CSAs, her

article touches on many of the same issues that plague CSA movements albeit to a lesser extent in most cases. DeMuynck's exploration of neoliberal individualism and its reproduction through a farmers' market offered many comparisons to my ethnographic findings over the course of my fieldwork. DeMuynck's focus in the article on the 'processes of neoliberal urbanism and the reproduction of socio-spatial inequality via a highly idealized space' (3, 2019), through concepts such as "sense of community", "authenticity", "individualism" and "doing the right thing", resonates with much of the research done around urban community agricultural projects. These very concepts informed much of the discussion on chapter 2 "Suburbia, Community & Growth". Blättel-Mink et al. (2017) also create similar concepts, "sociopolitical", "spiritual-communal", and "pragmatic-economic", these being applied to the experiences of the CSA in Germany. The famers' market is portrayed as an ethical alternative to mainstream supermarket shopping. In some ways it is but for DeMuynck the benefits generated by a famers' market are shrouded by its capitulation to neoliberal capitalism through the four concepts just mentioned. CSAs can easily become victims of the same neoliberal machinations, however, unlike the general interpretation that farmers' markets have been compromised CSAs offer much more resilience. While CSAs must exist within a neoliberal system (in the West) there is scope to achieve things at a local level. Think that little blue oasis in a sea of oranges and reds. 'CSAs can be conceptualised as attempts to engage with ethical issues in the food system' says Charles (2011, 362). These ethical issues can range from food insecurity to bee hive welfare but across the board CSAs generally strive to alleviate, or at the very least bring attention to, a plethora of ethical issues in local and global food systems. Unlike the famers' market a CSA is setup with the express mission to answer a food ethics question which varies from CSA to CSA. While DeMuynck is sceptical of the "ethical consumerism" taking place at the farmers' market Thompson and Coskuner-Balli (2007) appear to be a little less so yet still observe that 'this market system works through a confluence of economic, ideological and cultural factors that leverage anti-globalization sentiments…that provide a marketplace resource for consumers to co-produce feelings of enchantment' (2007,278). Optiz et al. (2019) conclude in their paper that the CSA model through 'direct collaboration with the consumers allows CSA farmers to gain greater independence from volatile markets but increases their dependency on the shareholder group of consumers' (2019, 22). This point highlights an interesting dichotomy found both in the CSA experience itself but also in the discourse on the analysis of said CSAs. Community Supported Agriculture may very well be able to inoculate itself to a certain extent from neoliberal mechanisms through its direct relationship with consumers or what many CSA projects would refer to as members. However, these members themselves will carry numerous assumptions and beliefs about the world around them and a more direct relationship with them leaves CSAs susceptible to the whims of their membership bases. This thinking falls in line with what White (2013) states; that the greatest weakness of the model is that struggle to earn enough for financial security, this fact sometimes being shrouded by the "positive brand mythology" of the CSA enterprise. This raises another common discussion point within CSAs themselves and the research carried out on them, the "sense of community" often touted

as one of the crowning achievements of the CSA model. This sense of community branches out beyond the individual CSA membership as well including neighbouring CSAs if any exist. However, the prolific writer on the area, Galt, and his numerous co-authors, (2013, 2016, 2019) note that 'there are indications that not all is well within CSA, with studies commonly noting inadequate farmer earnings, as well as challenges with member support' (2016, 493). For Galt et al. the issues stem from the rhetoric of CSAs that they 'are directly connected through more local and/or socially embedded supply chains' (2016, 491), are in fact subject to competition much like their more conventional counterparts. While the example of Californian CSAs provided by Galt et al. depicts an area saturated with CSA style projects, and thus ever-increasing competition, the parallels between Californian CSAs and Irish CSAs are most certainly there. Due to this "market saturation" alongside competition by alternatives to the CSA (famers' market, organic stores, etc) Galt et al. 'theorise that competition will erode the sense of community and support for the farmer in what is supposed to be community supported agriculture' (2016,496). The CSA from my research does not appear to be as dire a situation as those in California, however, the issues are eerily similar. There is another facet of their existence that research shows CSAs appear to suffer; governmental (local and national) policy, or lack thereof. Something I will refer to in chapter 3 in relation to Feirm Bheag Medici et al (2021) point out that in Italy one of the largest roadblocks for the country's burgeoning CSA network is the lack of attention from governmental bodies; 'the lack of policy support is containing further CSA diffusion and consolidation' (2021, 1). When one boils down many of the other factors that make life difficult for a CSA it is the lack of local and national governmental support that may very well be the most existential issue to face many of the CSAs around the world.

With mention of existential threats this brings us to the planet-sized elephant in the room; climate change, a "wicked problem" (Rittel & Webber 1973) if there ever was one. Some of the recent high-profile work in anthropology done on climate change has come from Eriksen and his teams around the world. Primarily situated in areas in dire straits Eriksen's work throughout the last decade has focused on the detrimental effects concentrated human activity can have on the natural environment. Of particular interest is the concept put forward by Eriksen, that of "overheating", 'the confluence of several runaway processes' and 'unintended side-effects' (2016, 22), resulting from multiple forms of "growth". The issues Eriksen continually returns to throughout the book is that of the "double-bind", the antagonism between human societal growth and sustainability. His comments are not particularly hopeful in relation to the potential negating effects that alternative human systems can have on this global overheating. However, it is still acknowledged that these alternatives movements, alternative agriculture included, are attempts, regardless of how in vain they may be, at holding back the ever warming tide. However, while Eriksen does acknowledge attempts made by "alternative communities" to counteract the accelerating heating of the planet he appears to underestimate the potential of this

alternatives. While it cannot be denied that global climate change seems to be an unstoppable force whipping up what Tutton would call "wicked futures" (2017), Eriksen's focus is very much on the material. This emphasis on the material is understandable but this results in an overly broad and pessimistic portrayal of the planet as it currently stands, sidelining the more imaginative (and of course material) endeavours and their implications for new possibilities. New possibilities Eriksen seems to think are either impossible or irrelevant due to the nature of acceleration. I point to what Eriksen termed the "cooling" (2020) effect that the CSA farm has not only in physical space but also in the imagination (formulated as thoughts, words, as so on). This cooling effect is underestimated by Eriksen, he contends that 'global capitalism is capable of absorbing many thousand such green pockets without changing its course so much as a millimeter', (2016, 47) perhaps it is that Eriksen is too far away to see these slight, but not insignificant, shifts. This "micro-cooling", as I call it, is not so concerned with changing things on a large scale instead it is situated within a small space which can be either physical or conceptual. In the case of the CSA the cooling effect is exerting its possibilities on both a physical space, the land the CSA is placed upon, and conceptual space, the imaginaries of those involved with the farm. If one were to chart a heat map over CSA and the surrounding suburban outskirts of Dublin City you would find a small cool blue oasis in a sea of oranges and reds. A concept that may assist in forwarding my argument here is that of Kath Weston's (2017) "intimacy", or "techno-intimacy" to be specific in Weston's argument. For Weston, this techno-intimacy is the 'affective, often sentimental, attachments produced through virtual interactions with aspects of high-tech devices' (2017, 40). As this techno-intimacy demarcates a relationship between humans and a type of non-human it is a concept that applies to other human-non-human relationships. The important part of the concept for our purposes is not the "techno" but the "intimacy". To make the distinction one could call this human-non-human intimacy "phyto-intimacy",[2] but the essence of Weston's concept remains the same. This intimacy, in whatever form appears to lack in Eriksen's conclusions and if it is something that he considered its inclusion is miniscule. The "phyto-intimacy" is a novel term for something that already exists within anthropological discourse in many animistic forms. We can see an example of this in Tsing's (2015) account of the wild matsutake mushroom trade in the United States, in which intimacy of a sort between the mushrooms and the mushroom pickers is evident. Tsing places this relationship in a backdrop of capitalist ruin, however, it is the tightly bound relationship between the human and the non-human, which allows the mushroom pickers to locate their highly sought prize that is emphasized. I will mention here briefly something I show in chapter 6; while there is dread and pessimism in the extremes, there is hope in the mundane. Eriksen focuses on, for the most part, pessimistic extremes. Of course these extremes are troublingly becoming much more common, yet by ignoring what lies outside of the extreme, the mundane, one may miss the alternatives and real possibilities for change. The key to this

[2] I use "phyto" (Greek for plant) term for two reasons. Firstly, the relationship discussed in this thesis primarily revolves around the human-plant relationship, but does include other non-humans as well as the surrounding environment itself. Secondly, both "eco-intimacy" and "bio-intimacy" were already taken.

mundanity is intimacy. To quote Bryden "Blackfish" Tully, 'It often comforts me to think that even in war's darkest days, in most places in the world absolutely nothing is happening'. This quote is not here to make light of the dire situations facing people all around the world, it is here to illustrate that in ignoring perceived mundanity, one can miss quite a lot. To return so something mentioned at the beginning of this review, Rittel and Webber's (1973) concept of a "wicked problem" is certainly applicable here. A wicked problem put simply is an issue that is not easily solved due to complex reasons for its occurrence and/or complex solutions required to solve it. The wicked can also simply elude to the dangerous or destructive potential of the problem. An updated version of the concept formulated by Tutton's (2017) "wicked futures". In his piece, Tutton formulates the future in two distinct ways, "present futures" and "latent futures". The former is the 'words, statements, images, visions or expectations of the future that made and circulate in the present (2017, 8), the latter is 'real but have not yet fully developed' (2017, 9). Between these two formulations of the future, which we go into more detail with later on, we get the problem of "wicked futures", the idea that the future is an incredibly difficult thing to do anything with. A wicked future such as global climate change is not only difficult to predict but also difficult to solve due to its complexity and the danger it poses. One potential way of projecting and simulating these futures is through the use of the imagination, which I frame as the "popular imagination" in chapter 5 through a discussion of science fiction; one of the most potent imaginative tools for thinking about what the present and distant future(s) might hold.

A core characteristic of science fiction is communication with beings other than ourselves but in the proceeding thesis I take a much more grounded approach to human communication with the non-human. The human-non-human relationship generally gets left out of conversations about the economic and social viability of a CSA project, or its ability to foster a community and withstand the onslaught of neoliberal consumerism. However, the non-humans have a just as important role in the philosophies of the CSA movement, and alternative agriculture projects in general. I believe it is inherently important in the development of any analysis of the CSA movement and similar projects. With the non-human being of utmost importance to the ethos of CSA to ignore it is to miss an integral facet of the alternative agriculture experience. There has been, however, a recent resurgence in discourse regarding the topic of animism, neo-animism or animacy as it is generally referred to as today. This revived discourse is often credited to Descola (2013) who reintroduced animism as part of his argument for a total reimagining of anthropology. While animism is nothing new to anthropology, being a staple of ethnographic enquiry since the discipline's inception, neo-animism has rejuvenated the concept and with this has come a whole new body of work. And it is this resurgent body of work that may provide useful tool in the analysis of the human-non-human relationships that occur within a CSA. Kohn (2013) argues for the decentring of the human in anthropological enquiry which is the first major step in any neo-animist study. In decentring the human experience as the central reference point in ethnographic

enquiry it allows the anthropologist to account for experience in a much more wholistic approach. As Weston contends the various neo-animisms attempt to render 'trees and humans and rocks and cows inseparable' (2017, 4). Making everything inseparable while removing human experience from its plinth, enables a much more intimate analysis. Within this analysis the concept of "assemblages" forwarded by Delueze and Guattari (2004) also arises as a possible addition to further understandings of human-non-human relationships. It should be noted that neo-animism, or animacy, comes in both a conceptual variety but also a grammatical one (de Swart & de Hoop, 2018). In this thesis the focus is primarily on the former. What else needs to be mentioned is the still developing discussion over what is "animate" and what is "inanimate". The debate, however, is not as simple as deciding what is animate and what is not, for as Giraldo Herrera (2018) notes some researchers point to the idea of "inanimate" being redundant in of itself. Instead what is favoured and what I tend to side with is the idea that all things are animate in one way or another. Speaking of the beliefs of the Ojibwa and subsequently some anthropologists, 'everything in the world is intrinsically highly dynamic, changes, moves, and decays. Everything, even corpses for that matter, is subject to the processes of transformation' (2018, 23). Descola in "Beyond Nature and Culture" (2013) noted that interacting with individuals, be they human, non-human, conscious or not requires an "intersubjective relation", this being something Giraldo Herrera (2018) also raises as important. This intersubjective relation is "mediated by techniques" but also by symbols and other signs which often require acknowledging and taking into consideration their subjective point of view' (2018, 23-24). Addressing the first part of this quote the symbols and other signs, Kohn (2013) offers a number of thoughts. The most important is that all living things are semiotic (Kohn 2013, Dwyer 2005, Uexküll 1982). Granted Kohn does not go as far as to say that all things, living and non-living, are semiotic but to focus on this is to ignore the importance to this contribution. Through an analysis of the Runa people and what can be termed their eco-cosmology Kohn puts forward the argument that all living things be it human, animal, plant or fungus engage with the world through sign systems. For Kohn we must engage with these beyond the human semiotic systems to grasp a better understanding of the world around us and the other beings that call it home. Between Kohn (2013) and Weston (2017) a spiritual side to animacy becomes apparent, much like that of the animism of old. McFadden (2019) through his discussion of "deep agroecology" explores this spiritual connection in depth with one of the key terms he raises being "panpsychism", the viewpoint that everything we encounter – from a cloud to a tree to a pebble – has a mind…panpsychism offers a unified conception of nature' (2019, 70). While this is not exactly what animacy is setting out to do per se there is most certainly overlap. If we return quickly to Kohn and the Runa people we find an ethnographic example where there are certainly motifs of what one could call spirituality although Kohn's analysis would not go as far as to claim that all things are conscious. Admittedly panpsychism goes rather far, exceeding the realms of anthropological enquiry. In fact it is beyond the analytical reach of almost all things save philosophy. However what panpsychism does offer another frame through which to reflect on the all-important concept of perspective. We will give McFadden's writings more thoughts in

chapter 6. If one is skeptical of the idea of some form of spiritual "phyto-intimacy" one can take a more conservative view of the concept which considers a place like Feirm Bheag a place of dialogue between two different ways of life in the West, and between humans and non-humans. With the help of Whorf (1956) this idea of place as dialogue is explored in chapter 4, through "hope", both the word from Whorf's work with the Hopi "tunátya" and the concept in a more general sense synthesized from definitions formulated by Fox (2015) and Lane (2018).

If we look to the wider context of anthropological research within the sphere of community supported farming, and in particular urban CSA, we do find a number of scholars working in the field. Agriculture in all its variety has been a mainstay of ethnographic enquiry since the inception of anthropology, and so it is unsurprising that our discipline would be interested in CSA-type projects. One example of recent research being carried out in Europe is Medici et al.'s (2021) work in Italy, in which they point out that CSA is something of a new phenomenon in the country. The authors' findings mirror my own, in which "intangible benefits" such as 'cooperation in sharing resources, civic engagement, sense of place and emotional attachments that cannot be valued in monetary terms' (2021, 7). Moving to the United States, White adds that 'a symbiosis of independent *and* [sic] collective identity making has constituted a vital part of CSA history' (2015, 46). Bittel et al. (2016) categorise the different types of CSA into "sociopolitical", "spiritual-communal", and "pragmatic-economic", while I am unsure of the latter of the three in terms of its applicability to the human-non-human phenomena observed, the categories of "sociopolitical" and "spiritual-communal" certainly add another useful way for social science to further its study of CSA's "intangible benefits". Birtalan et al. (2020) are another recent addition to the growing body of work with their examination of "food-related well-being", in which they suggest that CSA 'practices provide a fresh perspective, inviting reflection on opportunities to improve economic, environmental, and social well-being and adding to the quality of like in relation to food' (2020,12). While these benefits are of great importance to the members and the farmer(s), there are potentially negative impacts to this which Galt (2013) highlights as "self-exploitation" which occurs 'because of farmers' strong sense of obligation to their members' (2013, 341). This "self-exploitation" can heavily affect the farmer(s) both financially and mentally, thus, I argue, without appropriate supports in place CSA projects are in a near-constant state of precarity. If we move on to the area of human-non-human research, or neo-animism, the field has seen a recent explosion in interest from scholars across many academic fields. We have already discussed Kohn (2013) in some detail in chapter four, and we have cited Weston (2017) throughout. I have also mentioned others who are tackling the subject include the such as Tsing (2015) and Descola (2013). Caillon et al. argue, as I have also argued, that when considering the human and biodiversity, one must 'conceive of human and ecological well-beings as an interrelated system' (2017,1). As we have spirituality is an important part of this human-non-human connection, I cite McFadden (2019) a number of times in chapter six in relation to this. But spiritual

elements are brought up in Kohn (2013), Weston (2019), Tsing (2015), Salazar et al. (2017), and Descola (2013) in one form or another. If we look to the more general context of academia and its discussion over climate change, the amount of recent work is immense. In the conflux of anthropology, sociology, technology, philosophy, and Earth sciences, we have a number of important publications coming at a time when we need them most. To name but a few; Virno (2015), Clark and Szerszynski (2021), Horvat (2021), and Hatherley (2021). Of particular interest may be Moore (2017, 2018) and his discussions on the "Capitalocene" and "Green Arithmetic", and so before I give the reader my final thoughts I will briefly discuss some of his findings. Much like the claims I make here, Moore along similar lines argues for the removal of binary distinction between the "Human" and "Nature". As he succinctly puts it, the 'dualism obscures our vistas of power, production, and profit in the web of life. It prevents us from seeing the accumulation of capital as a powerful web of interspecies dependencies' (2017, 598). Much like how I argue that a distinction between the human and the non-human must be deconstructed, Moore shows us that even our societal organisations are part of nature, for how can they not be. This "Green Arithmetic", serves only to alienate, ignoring the 'living, multispecies connections of humans-in-nature and the web of life' (2017, 598), for what it truly is. While what I explore is the rekindling, a (re)discovering of our deep connections with what lies beyond us, Moore importantly points out that we were part of "Nature" all along. We humans are inherently part of planet's environment, we do not hold a special status that removes us from the world around us, 'even if the natures we inhabit are often filled with concrete' (Moore 2017, 600). Moore also formulates another idea, that of "Cheapening", again something in the realm of what we touched on earlier in the thesis. This "Cheapening", 'rendering the work of many humans – but also of animals, soils, forests and all manner of extra-human nature – invisible' (2017, 600), this being an excellent explanation for the black-boxing of supermarkets that many of my research participants cited as a motivation for joining Feirm Bheag. "Cheapening" also manifests as other black boxes. Another form of black-boxing that Feirm Bheag shines a light on is that of the "footprint metaphor", the way of talking about the effects human activity has on the non-human world. These metaphors are black boxes in the way they obscure, 'because they disregard the creativity of extra-human natures. They ignore how extra-human natures are also producers of historical change' (2018, 247). Moore encapsulates his arguments within a critique of capitalism's understanding of the non-human, hence the "Capitalocene" rather than the "Anthropocene". And this is an incredibly important relationship to emphasise and critique, for 'Nature cannot be reduced to a mere substrate or surface…This is how capital views nature' (2018, 247). As we have seen throughout the pages of this thesis, the view that "capital" holds of "nature" is one not only one dimensional, and thus ignoring countless phenomena, but is also incredibly dangerous for all life on Earth. As I will argue, what lies beyond the human, and understanding our relationship with it, is of paramount importance. Capitalism would rather simply ignore the non-human, what enabled it to thrive in the first place. Moore continues; 'Life in the capitalist era rebels against these reductions and simplifications. Weeds evolve. Horses refuse to work. Viruses mutate. Extra-human

natures in other words, actively refuse their designation as Nature' (2018, 247). It is important here, however, not to "anthropocise" non-human activity. While we may see something of rebellion in the practice of evolution or refusal to work, in reality these are forms of activity that non-humans take part in regardless of human interaction. Although it can be said that these actions can be influenced by humans. Baring that in mind, it is still useful to conceptualise the non-human as not neatly fitting into defined parameters, as we have seen it does not. I will rest the discussion with Moore here, but that is not to say there is no more to be said. In fact, the discussion is only getting started. The body of collective research is continually growing, and with the global turn in attention toward the state of our planet's climate, anthropology, alongside social science and the humanities, has positioned itself as a vanguard of this knowledge building, showing the profound connections the human has with the non-human. The discourses held within will only become more crucial as we venture further into the 21st century.

The above literature review is designed to situate this work in the general area that this thesis and the research carried out for it find themselves. One might notice the above covers quite a large swathe of various topics but one can rarely shoehorn any anthropological enquiry into a single box. And so, we will journey forth into the land of the community supported agriculture, a land of wonder, hope, peril, and, of course, imagination.

Winter

Chapter I: CSA & Food

'Moving dirt and moving tyres, it's what we do.'

- *Mia*

I painted a particular picture of the CSA in my introduction, one of the CSA's best days I had been there, a day in the deep summer. I would like to paint a different picture here. Behind what is very much an unassuming gate, indicated only by a foot-long sign, is an acre or thereabouts of land. It's seemingly barren (in reality it isn't), windswept, and if not for the 40-foot container and two polytunnels it would be hard to convince anyone that anything grew here at all bar grass and some funny looking weeds. This is Feirm Bheag Community Farm or at least what it was like when I started my first day of volunteering and began my fieldwork in February. This was Feirm Bheag out of season, in the depth of Irish Winter. The 1 acre site is "officially" industrial zoned land, on a tertiary road between two towns in East Kildare and close to the border with Dublin. While it is zoned as industrial land, the plot of land to the right and the plot facing the farm across the road are both occupied by schools. One primary and one secondary. For the majority of my research stint the site the land on the left was an empty space with only bits of rubble and grass calling it home. This changed and by the time I was at the end of my fieldwork the site was being "developed" into a large warehouse. Rumour had it that the warehouse would be used for aeroplane parts and maintenance.

Fig.5: Winter & Summer

As you pass through the open gate you walk down a stretch of dirt road, wild berry bushes to your left which if you look through the branches, and through the next field you can see the cars, lorries and buses rushing by on the nearby motorway. Many of the bushes have been removed by the new neighbours with the site to the left once lying empty now populated by high-vis builders, large industrial machinery and laser scanning equipment. Something will be built. To your right is the farmland itself. All told less than an acre most of which at this time of year is covered in black plastic sheets to discourage the growth of weeds. Woven through these sheets stand towers of tyres acting as weights on the plastic. It's windy on this patch of land. You keep walking and are now met by a long 40-foot shipping container. Its bright red colour making it stand out from everything around. Walking alongside the container you round the corner of it to an open door. This is Feirm Bheag Headquarters, fondly known simply as the "Container". As you peak inside you can see makeshift tables made from deconstructed wooden pallets you can also see a chest of drawers with a label on each drawer, 'Kitchen', 'Office', 'Seeds', 'Gloves'. At the back wall sits the tool racks where every manual tool an urban farmer could need awaits use. Inside the "Container" is where the produce is weighed and stored, but there isn't much of that on a winter's day such as this. You turn around from the front door of the container and look to your right where a second gate partitions the entrance road from the farm itself. This gate has blown down so many times no-one bothers to put it back up these days. You walk into the farm and looking to your left there are two polytunnels, one small and one large, both having seen far better days (a new third polytunnel would be built in November 2020). The small tunnel is primarily used as the seed sowing centre during sowing season and a drying room during harvest time. It is also home to the more exotic fruits grown on the farm; chillies. Directly behind the small tunnel sits the large one. Being double the size of its sibling the large tunnel houses the roughly 60 varieties of tomatoes cultivated here alongside cucumbers, French beans, and various green leaf salads during the height of the growing season. But it being winter the bright colours and sweet aromas of the height of summer are no longer here. Now the ground inside the tunnel lies mostly empty covered in a mix of wood shavings and chicken droppings. Recently three bathtubs were moved in against the back wall to act as raised beds. Two of the three were planted with a salad leaf that turned out to taste so bitter no one wanted it. You look directly ahead at what resembles a path. It is not much more than well-trodden ground with two large plywood sheets covering the first 2 or 3 meters. Past the plywood you meet the muddy ground where countless boot prints have dissuaded the grass from taking root. This track takes you past the first of the vegetable plots. These plots are between 20 and 30 meters long depending on the topography and are spaced less than half a meter apart. Continuing along the path, which meets the less used grass filled walkways at a number of points, you come to what could be considered the centre of the farm. Here lays a large water tank roughly the size of a small car, the porous water hoses when not in use, a large wall of tyres each segment piled 5 high, a table made from pallets on which sits white plastic mesh sheets for protecting vegetables from small hopping ne'er-do-wells and a large old wooden frame that had been used as a makeshift gazebo in the past. Standing here you have a choice, going left

will bring you to vegetable plots and going right will bring you to even more vegetable plots including the plots where the more unusual and seasonal produce is grown. Going straight past the water tank and tyres will bring you to the largely unused herbal garden and the solitary water tap, the farm's only source of running water. If you're standing beside the water tap and do a 180 degree turn you will facing back toward the entrance to the farm and be able to see that gate no one bothers putting up anymore poking out of tall strands of grass. And that, more or less, and not taking into account temporary changes to the layout, is Feirm Bheag farm.

Most of which was at this time of the year looking a bit sparse as many of the fruit and vegetables had yet to be planted or the ones that were still had a lot of work to do before they would resemble anything particularly edible. Over the next few months I would encounter people involved with a number of different 'urban farming' initiatives, urban farming being a term I use loosely to connect many different methods and ethos around growing food in a non-traditional manner. But it is at the CSA that I would find a home of sorts for the duration of my fieldwork. Now that we have an idea of where we are looks like I think a good place to go next on this whole journey is to the explanation of what exactly a CSA or 'Community Supported Agriculture' model of farming is. While the term itself certainly gives a lot of clues allow me to fill in the details. 'Community Supported Agriculture' is a model whereby the relationship between the grower and the consumer is direct and very often local with no shop or other third party acting as middleman between food production and consumption. A CSA is funded by the consumers who become members paying a subscription fee monthly or annually and in return the CSA provides fresh produce each week of the season. The food has been grown in accordance with agroecological principles, this meaning for all intents and purposes that there are no chemical agents used to produce the food. There are plenty of variations of the CSA model of course depending on the location, the philosophy behind the project, the level of outside support or funding, among other factors. But to give a general brushstroke this is the basic premise of 'Community Supported Agriculture'. And as stated on the Irish Community Supported Agriculture Network website;

> *"This partnership allows everyone to share both the rewards and also the challenges that our independent farmers face every year. The CSA model is a way to self-organise food distribution systems. This is more than a model to feed you with healthy, local and organic food; it is a commitment, and encourages learning and community engagement."*

As the statement from the website says the CSA model while primarily about food is not only just about food. And while each CSA has a unique identity there are common strands that link them all together.

Commitment varies but there is a general commitment to growing food for the local area in a sustainable way and using organic practices. According to the Network when I viewed the now defunct website there were between 10 and 15 active CSAs on the island of Ireland. This count included both the Republic and Northern Ireland all varying in size and produce. Due to their somewhat transient nature, the number of CSAs in Ireland is fluid. In all likelihood there exists numerous other CSA-styled projects that either are too small to be counted or do not engage with the wider CSA community. The CSA is also a relatively new phenomenon in Ireland and as a result has limited reach in the minds of the general public of the country. While other forms of community agriculture, such as allotments or community gardens, are well understood, the CSA model remains a rather niche affair. I was fortunate enough to be invited to be part of what I considered the only truly urban CSA in the country at the time. While others certainly have members from urban areas and so would service cities and suburbs, our CSA was situated in a suburb, admittedly on the fringes of a suburb but in one nonetheless. The reason I raise this is that it is something we will return to in chapter 2 but I think the urban-ness of this particular CSA is not something to be dismissive of.

Community farming in its broadest sense has been a fact of life since the inception of the first agricultural revolution 12,000 years ago. In the broadest sense that I like to think most accurate farming up until the point of the Industrial Revolution and second Agricultural Revolution could be considered community farming in one form or another. One could argue that this is a simple rose-tinted view of history and so I would like to make a number of qualifications. Firstly I do not conflate community farming here as farming *for* the community. Nor by using the term "community farming" does it necessitate something positive for a community. I simply mean that in many cases farming was done by members of a local community to feed the local community. This does not ignore the fact that farmed goods would travel rather large distances even in the time of antiquity, the Roman Empire got good use of the 100,000km of roads they built after all (Hitchner 2012). Trade certainly did take place although much of this trade may have had a large man with a sword eyeballing you as a motivator.

Alternative Irish Agriculture

The CSA is a relatively new addition to the scene but this is not the same for the myriad of different types of alternative food growing movements in Ireland. In the next section I will explore the potential origin points of the CSA model but before doing so it is useful to briefly look to the other types of alternative agricultural practices that take place in the country. As mentioned in the introduction, Dublin is no stranger to farming and gardening outside of the "traditional" mechanised farming of a neoliberal

capitalist economy. The most common type of alternative agriculture in the City and its suburban surrounds are allotments. A form of urban commons, 'allotment gardening has allowed respondents to at least partially dismantle their previous identities as neoliberal subjects' (Corcoran, Kettle & O'Callaghan 2017, 319). Allotments generally consist of a number of pockets of land that are tended to by individuals and through the practice of cultivation and sharing of produce with others that commoning takes place. In fact, much of urban alternative agriculture can be considered commoning in that they facilitate a resistance to policies and governmental indifference to the commodification of food and growing (Morrow 2019). The majority of 'urban commons is not derived from any explicit political motivation ("we want to make an anti-capitalist society") or ethical stance ("it is good to share")' (Bresnihan & Byrne 2015, 48). Instead, these alternative practices are propelled by a need to escape the city or the overbearingness of neoliberal society. In addition to allotments, there a community gardens which operate as a hybrid of sorts between a CSA model and that of allotments. Although less common that allotments, Dublin City and its surrounds are home to a number of both publicly sponsored and private community gardens. With the rare exception, the vast majority of alternative urban food projects contend with one issue in particular: 'in the absence of any holistic statutory urban food policy…initiatives remain subject to a fragmented and multiscalar policy landscape which has evolved to govern food as a commercial commodity' (Davies, Cretella & Franck 2019, 13). Be it an allotment, food sharing project, community garden or a CSA the external pressure from a commodified treatment of food and food production is constant.

Origins of the CSA Model

Attempt to look into the origins of the CSA model and what you will find is murky waters. With no single point of origin that can claim to have inspired the contemporary movement it is difficult to trace the history of the movement at large. Histories vary; 1980s United States, 1970s Chile, 1970s Japanese housewives, 1920s Austrian philosopher and founder of the Anthroposophy movement, Rudolf Steiner. Each of these claim to foster the beginning of the movement before it moved onto the international stage, in reality it is most likely that their stories informed each other. While it could be simply muddled history as to why we have multiple beginnings it may also be a result of each subsequent iteration from each of the above origins has their own story they tell themselves as to how and why they exist. This is facilitated by the fact there is no solid unified history. It is also worth mentioning that it appears much of the history that is known is passed down in what resembles oral tradition or as we might call it word of mouth. This is certainly the case for the origins of Feirm Bheag CSA and from reading what few origins stories do exist, or at least ones I could find, it appears that the passing down of CSA history and philosophy is not one of written texts but one of words. But it is still worth consulting what exists

of the written origin stories of the CSA model as they do offer much insight into the over-arching beliefs and sets of values that hold these sometimes disparate alternative agricultural projects together.

If we are to chart these potential points of origin chronologically it puts Rudolf Steiner out roughly 50 years ahead of the others. Steiner and his followers have produced vast amounts of literature and projects that stem from Steiner's philosophies, the most well know of which is the Steiner School or Waldorf education as it is sometimes known. We will circumvent the majority of his work and focus on some select, but important, parts of the immense library of Steiner philosophy. Namely some parts of the aforementioned Anthroposophy which forms the spiritual and philosophical backbone of Steiner's work and of Waldorf education itself, that of his "Agriculture Course", or "Spiritual Foundations for the Renewal of Agriculture" and its results and Bio-Dynamic farming championed by Ehrenfried Pfeiffer well into the mid-20th century. Steiner's "Agriculture Course" much like that of Socrates' dialogues were never formally recorded by Steiner himself. Instead we heavily rely on the writings of his students who were present during the series of lectures that make up his "Agriculture Course". The course of lectures was delivered in Koberwitz, Silesia in mid-June, 1924. According to one of the few writings that Steiner provides in regards to his reasons for convening the "Agriculture Course" he states; 'the aim of these lectures was to arrive at such practical ideas concerning agriculture as should combine with what has already been gained through practical insight and modern scientific experiment with the spiritual considerations of the subject' (1924,9). The lectures gave rise to the Group of Anthroposophical Agriculturalists in 1925. The following year this association was renamed the Association of Anthroposophical Farmers in 1926. Walter Ritter, who was present at the meeting in Dornach in 1926, provides the first recording of this name. Ritter in his record "On the Work if the Anthroposophical Farmers and their Meeting at Dornach in January, 1926" gives a summary of the goings-on of this gathering from technical, economic, scientific and philosophical presentations. Ritter's summary of this meeting is useful not only for its historical value but it also offers clear insight into the philosophical beliefs of the early anthroposophical farming movement which in turn would eventually become the Bio-Dynamic movement. In Ritter's words, when writing about an evening presentation by a Dr. Wachsmuth, 'we can learn to use the course of lectures given to us by Dr. Steiner, like the letters of an alphabet, and thus activate the spiritual teaching in ever-changing forms, rising gradually from 'Shepherds' to 'Kings' and 'Magi'' (1926, 53) – from caretakers of the land to protectors of the people. Anthroposophical farming was formulated in opposition to the growing use of artificial fertilizers and increasingly industrialised agriculture across Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but also to combat the 'increasing greediness…turning the individual farms into mere mechanical 'means of production', and the whole economic life into a 'business' detached from the heavenly expanse' (1926,52). The anthroposophic farmer practices organic and sustainable cultivation so that through seeking 'to become a healer for Earth, plant and animal, can finally become, by this

activity, a healer of men' (1926, 53). We will see similar causes for creation replicated when we look at the 'teikei' movement and that of the Garden City. Not long after this meeting we come across the first reference to "Biological-Dynamic" farming, the term being coined in the late 1920s by Ehrenfried Pfeiffer and a group of core followers of Steiner's new philosophical thoughts.

Pfeiffer did much more than simply coin a new term for the agricultural wing of the anthroposophical movement. According to Paull (2011), in 1928 the biological-dynamic method would separate itself from its anthroposophic origins and attempt to identify itself as a stand-alone entity and it has remained a separate enterprise to the anthroposophic movement to this day. Alongside this departure 1928 saw the creation of the Demeter Association[3]. Through "Demeter" certification, the bio-dynamic certificate of compliance, farms that are certified could promote the values laid out by Rudolf Steiner and Pfeiffer. The Demeter Association and its certification exist to this day. After a number of years and meetings between different biological-dynamic farmer groups biological-dynamic farming would eventually come to be known as bio-dynamic farming. The first record of this new term, which is still in use today, came with the publication of a book with the title of "Bio-Dynamic Farming and Gardening", by Pfeiffer in 1938. By the late 1930s the Bio-Dynamic movement began to resemble the movement as it currently exists and although Rudolf Steiner is credited as the creator of the method, 'the term bio-dynamic would have been entirely unfamiliar to him' (Paull 2011, 34). Pfeiffer can be arguably credited with carrying the mantle from Steiner from the late 1920s onwards and although many others were undoubtedly involved he is credited with being integral to the introduction of the bio-dynamic philosophy to the world outside the confines of Europe. Pfeiffer was a particularly prolific promoter in Australia and the United States but the movement is present in many places around the world. Steiner had never been specific in what he wanted his new form of agriculture to take and so it was left to his followers to tease out what the spiritual, technical, economic and social characteristics should be. I will not be cataloguing each of the iterations from Steiner's first lecture to the more or less completed basic ideology of bio-dynamic farming in the late 1930s instead we will take a look at Pfeiffer's 1938 publication, "Soil Fertility, Renewal and Preservation". The book of which there have been a number of reprints and yet it is still incredibly difficult to find is in many ways the culmination of the anthroposophic farmer associations' and the biological-dynamic turn bio-dynamic movement's ideology at the time of publication. In keeping with Steiner's holistic philosophy Pfeiffer describes bio-dynamic farming in similar ways. It is a method through which the custodian of the land, the farmer, can approach the land in a holistic manner so as to understand the vast web of connections between humanity an 'nothing smaller or less formidable than the entire universe' (1983[1938], 12). The bio-dynamic movement, at its core, concerns itself with how we might reverse the damage done to the planet and ourselves, and

[3] Presumably named after the Goddess of the same name.

safeguard the future through new forms of agriculture and land stewardship. For the bio-dynamic follower agriculture is where human civilisation begins and ends.

In terms of the growing and raising of food the method follows a similar ideology to that of the organic movement. There are differences however. While there is an emphasis on the rhythmic nature of plants in the organic movement, within Steiner ideology, cyclical temporality[4] is of paramount importance in bio-dynamics. Another difference is the application of what are called 'preparations'. Numbers 500-508, these preparations are a mixture of plant, mineral and animal waste extracts that are applied to both the soil and plants. Alongside these preparations Pfeiffer is at pains throughout the book to emphasise the importance of soil humus. Good humus levels with a healthy population of earthworms creates a 'living soil' and provides a superior growing medium. The second major difference is not in the realm of the physical but in that of the spiritual. That is not to say that the organic movement, and its siblings, lack a form of spirituality but unlike these movements where beliefs may vary greatly, in bio-dynamics the spiritual element is more singularly cohesive. As has already been mentioned bio-dynamics fosters an approach to farming that embraces a holistic view of humanity and its place in the world but this also extends into the realm of bio-dynamic spirituality which is one of holism. In Pfeiffer's own words;

> *'The solution of the agricultural crisis of the present time is a human spiritual problem. It consists in man's extending his knowledge of nature's being, of life's laws, and in the creation of a method of thought founded on the principle of an Organic Whole' (1983[1938], 182).*

Human spirituality was an inherent part of bio-dynamic farming and it remains an important part to this day with the contemporary Bio-Dynamic Association. Interestingly, the holistic spirituality endorsed by the movement still places the human at the centre, 'the human being himself is the strongest nature force' (1983[1938], 185), this is unlike the holism expressed by my research participants. While the bio-dynamic method and the mindset behind many of those at Feirm Bheag CSA matched, in terms of spirituality those that spoke about any form of belief tended not to make the human distinction. Regardless, as we will see, forms of agriculture like bio-dynamics, and of Feirm Bheag, are radical agricultures. Through their spirituality, among other characteristics, they reformulate the relationship between the human and the non-human, manifesting as alternate temporalities. We will return to these thoughts in chapters 4 and 6. The bio-dynamic movement as a whole has undoubtedly changed over the last 82 years since the publication of Pfeiffer's work but the core tenets he presents have remained

[4] Moon phases and menstruation both being mentioned in Steiner's lectures on agriculture.

at the heart of the philosophy's world view. In the Irish context there are a number of farms that formally practice bio-dynamic methods such as Cloughjordan Eco Village, and according to the Biodynamic Agriculture Association of Ireland, a smaller number hold Demeter certification from the Biodynamic Association in the UK. We now move on to the stories of the "teikei" system and its creation, but we will return to Ehenfried Pfeiffer and the bio-dynamic philosophy in later chapters, it's not done with us just yet.

Looking to the phenomenon of "teikei", one of the first stories concerns Japanese women coming to us curtesy of a TIMES magazine article from 3rd November, 2003. Under the title "Fresh off the Farm" Margot Roosevelt and Arroyo Grande, while discussing the general background of what a CSA is and does, tell us in nothing more than a few lines that the CSA movement began 'some 30 years ago with a group of women alarmed by pesticides, the increase in processed food and their country's dwindling rural population'. They also mention something called the women's teikei system, their "partnerships with local farmers through annual subscriptions" (2003). The authors of the article do not cite where their information is coming from, and it is difficult to verify this particular story in any English language source, although countless hours combing online archives have attempted to rectify that. However, if we focus on the term teikei, we are given a bit more to go on, including general references to the gender specificities of the early teikei movement. First of all, most sources tend to distinguish between the CSA model and teikei. But in reality both are similar in most respects with Feirm Bheag's constitution making direct reference to the teikei system in Section 6 stating that the farm will adhere to the philosophy laid out in the 10 principle of teikei. The more official stance from the Japan Organic Agriculture Association (JOAA) states that '"Teikei" is an idea to create an alternative distribution system, not depending on the conventional market. Though the forms of "teikei" vary, it is basically a direct distribution system' (1993).

The 10 principles[5], first published in 1978, then again published by the JOAA in 1993 for the 'Country Report' for the First IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements) Asian Conference, offer an idealised guide for creating an alternative agriculture system:

1. *Principle of mutual assistance.*
2. *Principle of intended production.*

[5] *The list including descriptions of each of the 10 Principles provided by the JOAA can be found in the appendix.*

3. Principle of accepting the produce.

4. Principle of mutual concession in the price decision.

5. Principle of deepening friendly relationships.

6. Principle of self-distribution.

7. Principle of democratic management.

8. Principle of learning among each group

9. Principle of maintaining the appropriate group scale.

10. Principle of steady development.

From these 10 principles a picture of what the teikei movement in Japan and by extension many a CSA that has incorporated these tenets into their project can be clearly drawn. The descriptions of each principle provided by the JOAA can be found in the appendix. Even without the descriptions however we can see that these 10 principles combined aim to provide the building blocks for a community-centric alternative agricultural project that is self-sustaining in multiple ways for the people who decide to become involved. Each of the 10 principles mainly concerned with fostering more deep and enriching relationships with those within a community but also concerned with ensuring that a community project such as a CSA remains focused on providing for the community (see principle 10). Also contained within this list are recommendations for how both consumers and farmers should act towards each other in terms of proper etiquette and duties toward one another. Interestingly, there is little mention of the farms or land themselves. This document is very much focused on the human elements of the alternative agriculture movement, albeit through them there are messages of land stewardship and ecological mindfulness.

The teikei movement, meaning 'partnership' in Japanese, developed during the 1960s and 1970s throughout Japan but primarily in urban centres like Tokyo and Kyoto. The movement enjoyed rapid expansion in the country throughout the 1980s and 1990s but, according to Kondoh (2015), when Japan adopted official organic certification laws in 2000 this signalled something of a death knell for this expansion phase. When we look at the reasons behind this as presented by Kondoh there are similarities to issues that the CSA movement here in Ireland face but more on that later. Kondoh states that not only 'for some teikei organic farmers, the certified standard is far from the ideal form of organic farming that they have been working to develop on their farms' (2015, 149) but also that 'the certification rule is a product of compromise, reflecting many stakeholders' interests, including those of conventional growers, distributors, large retailers, and foreign exporters' (2015, 149). The certification was not up

to scratch for many teikei groups, the process for acquiring the certification was also expensive, needlessly complex and steeped in bureaucracy. And as Kondoh correctly points out, unlike the teikei movement's adherence to the 10 principles the organic certificate came laden with outside interests that in many ways go against the teikei philosophy and arguably actively create difficulty, whether intentionally or unintentionally, for the continued existence of teikei systems. According to Kondoh's sources, numbers of teikei members did begin to dwindle in the later 20th century but 'despite the decline in membership and the closure of some groups, for long-time members it is absolutely necessary' (2015,150).

We now travel back to the West. In 1978 the first CSA operation in Europe took roots, Les Jardins de Cocagne, near Geneva in Switzerland. Yet, according to Urgenci, the European CSA advocacy network, there has been no confirmed connection of inspiration with the teikei system. Les Jardin de Cosagne still runs today and is one of the largest CSA operations in Europe with 400 weekly shares being delivered to members throughout Geneva City and its hinterlands. For comparison Feirm Bheag had a maximum 50 share capacity when I finished my fieldwork. Elsewhere in the West, specifically the United States in 1986, CSA is formed in the state of Massachusetts and from this the movement in North America was born. In the following decades the new CSAs sprang up across the United States and Canada. Whether this initial North American CSA was directly influenced by the Japanese teikei system is up for debate but the close temporal proximity, Japanese teikei in the 1960s and 1970s, United States CSA in the 1980s, there is every chance that it was. There is evidence that CSAs have taken the principles formulated by the teikei movement to heart mainly found in the self-professed histories of existing CSAs. However, there is another supposed beginning for the CSA in the United States in the same year of 1986 and only across the border from Massachusetts in New Hampshire. As to which of these CSAs heard the starting pistol firsts we may never know. Although Temple-Wilton Community Farm in New Hampshire is the more likely candidate. Temple-Wilton while not certified bio-dynamic was set up by Trauger Groh, a bio-dynamic farmer from Germany. Word of mouth certainly spread ideas of the CSA model across the United States around this time as well according to Elizabeth Henderson, a former president of Urgenci. But as we have seen with Enhrenfried Pfeiffer's Bio-Dynamic farming, alternative organic farming methods for growing food with an emphasis on sustainability and environmental stewardship had been introduced into the United States as early as 1930s with the foundation of The Biodynamic Association in New York.

While not generally included on the few existing discussions on the beginnings of the Community Supported Agriculture movement, there is another Western ideology that is possibly related and pre-existing all three sources discussed above. That of the "Garden City". The Garden City is, admittedly,

more urban planning project that agricultural doctrine but I still think it an important point of discussion as agriculture, green spaces and gardens are of central importance to the design philosophy. It is also of interest in the specific context of Feirm Bheag and the concept of the urban farm or urban garden as a way forward for farming in urban environments. Ebenezer Howard published "To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform" in 1898 in an attempt to answer a problem he believed to be universal; 'not only in England, but all over Europe and America and our colonies, that it is deeply to be deplored that the people should continue to stream into the already over-crowded cities, and should thus further deplete the country districts' (1898, 3). The answer to this, according to Howard, was the Garden City, which would not only alleviate the problems of urban overcrowded and rural depopulation but would act as the instrument through which all other social reform could be made.

> *'Yes, the key to the problem how to restore the people to the land - that beautiful land of ours, with its canopy of sky, the air that blows upon it, the sun that warms it, the rain and dew that moisten it - the very embodiment of Divine love for man - is indeed a Master-Key, for it is the key to a portal through which, even when scarce ajar, will be seen to pour a flood of light on the problems of intemperance, of excessive toil, of restless anxiety, of grinding poverty - the true limits of Governmental interference, ay, and even the relations of man to the Supreme Power' (Howard 1898,5).*

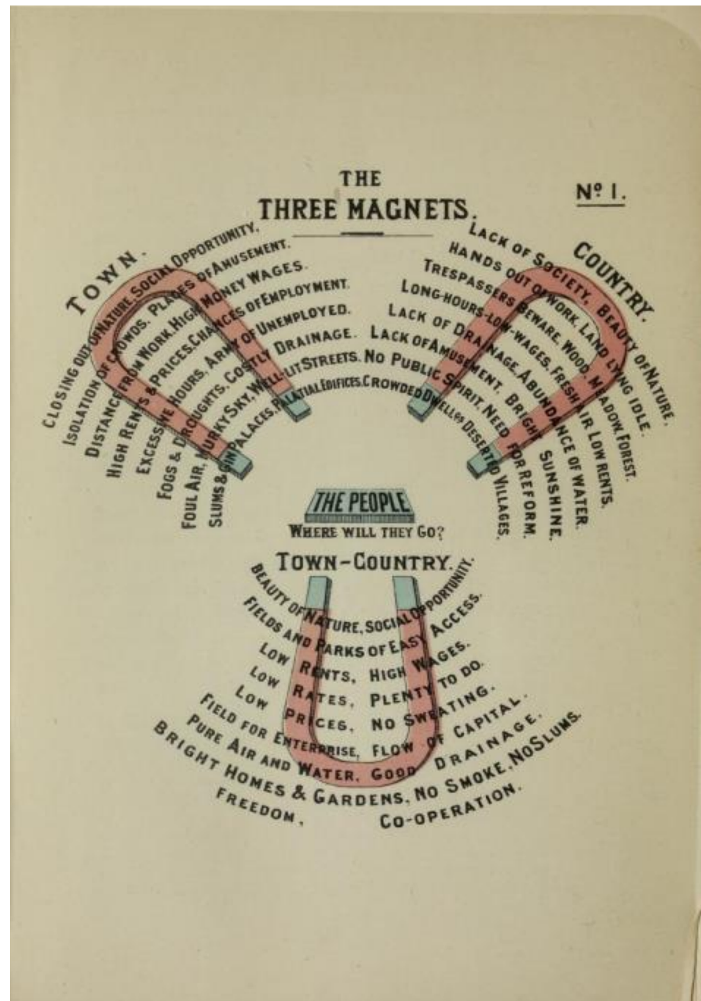

Fig.6: 'The Three Magnets' (Howard, 1898)

Howard created the "Town-Country Magnet" to explain his ideal urban planning project. His diagram the "Three Magnets", a tricorn shaped illustration includes the town-country magnet alongside the "town" and "country" magnets. Each represents their namesake with the town-country magnet being the idyllic combination of both town and country. The physical manifestation of this town-country magnet is the Garden City. The Garden City combines the industriousness of the urban without the pollution with the openness of the rural without the lack of amenities or job opportunities. Howard's belief in this new form of urban planning with its focus on green spaces and community gardens resonated with his contemporaries. The Garden City concept covers much more than just environmental considerations, with Howard laying out the administrative, financial and organisational operations of the Garden City (Tizot 2018). In 1903 construction on the first pilot project commenced resulting in the founding of Letchworth under the direction of the Garden City Association which had been set up 3 years earlier by some of those inspired by Howard's writings (Livesey 2011, 273). While the design

and execution of Letchworth was adapted by its architects, it remained close to the spirit of Howard's original vision.

Howard's Garden City model does not mention CSA by name specifically due to preceding the movement's inception by a number of decades. However, the two movements have qualities in common. Both are, or at least feature in the case of the Garden City, a novel approach to agriculture that diverges from established mechanised industrial farming practices. Both put weight on their attempts to harmonise the human and non-human. Howard understood that humans could not exist without 'Nature', this can be clearly seen through his 'three magnets' illustration. This illustration also points to his other objectives with the Garden City such as addressing the suffering of the urban poor. The 'town' and 'country' magnets both list positives and negatives but the third 'town-country' magnet combines the two offering "beauty of nature", "pure air and water" and "bright homes and gardens". The quote I inserted above the illustration also makes Howard's beliefs on the potential of the garden city clear. The Garden City model stops short of addressing nonhumans explicitly unlike many CSA movements such as Feirm Bheag. Both the Garden City concept and the CSA movement also prize communal ownership and future visions of self-guidance and self-sufficiency. For the Garden City this is through sole ownership of the land the city remaining in the hands of the people who create and live there, giving them total control over the destiny of the city. Even today the majority of the land around the first Garden City, Letchworth, is owned by the city's heritage council under a community land trust system (Cabannes & Ross 2018). For the CSA, self-guidance and self-sufficiency takes many forms be it a steering council, shareholder's committee or any other myriad of variations. Feirm Bheag with its understanding that it must exist within an urbanised environment is also in tune with the Garden City as it "radically challenged the expectation that a city is a dense, vibrant, and largely hard-landscaped environment" (Livesey 2016, 149). Livesey goes on to state that in relation to the land surrounding the city designated as agricultural land that "the objectives for the agricultural belt were never fully realized in practice; however, they describe the union of land, labor, infrastructure, and community that was the basis of the Garden City" (2016, 153). While it is difficult to pinpoint the historical ties between the Garden City concept and CSA the core values are shared by both. As the CSA model claims a number of different heritages, it is not too far of a stretch to posit that overlap is likely to have occurred either in the United Kingdom or elsewhere the Garden City has found traction.

In truth, there is no definitive historical origin point that can take full credit for the conception of the CSA model or movement. CSA, much like the philosophy it carries in the broadest terms, organically grew (pardon the pun) from a need in a particular place at a particular time. The CSA model is much

like most of human creation, something that is borne from necessity in a multiplicity or forms. The idea cannot be tied down to one individual or one group in one time. It is not the sole intellectual property of an alarmed Austrian philosopher, nor disgruntled Japanese women in the 1970s, nor concerned residents of a North-Eastern US state. Instead it belongs to all of them as well as the thousands others who have strived to create similar projects around the world. We have established that the CSA movement and the bio-dynamic philosophy not only share many similarities but both have intertwined many times throughout the 20th and early 21st centuries. We have also seen that there is a decent chance that the teikei movement had some interaction with the CSA methodology early on in both systems' development and explicit reference to teikei in Feirm Bheag CSA's constitution. But regardless of the cross pollination of ideas one thing is clear: the 20th century gave impetus to the creation of groups concerned with the direction human agriculture and society as a whole was taking. But the Garden City also alludes to something interesting; the active expressing of discontent with the direction of society, particularly with urban life, existed before the turn of the 20th century and well before Rudolf Steiner proposed a new form of agriculture. We should now take a bit of time to examine the larger overarching ideals and values that are common to the Western CSA, the teikei system, bio-dynamics and the Garden City. We will return to these overarching ideals in proceeding chapters so the following will serve as more of an introduction.

Now that we have an, albeit not definitive, idea of where the factors that have influenced the development of the CSA we can briefly discuss the three overarching ideological underpinnings of Feirm Bheag and the general relationship that members and volunteers have with the ideology. We will come back to each throughout the dissertation. It was already noted that in Feirm Bheag Farm's constitution there is direct reference to the 'teikei' movement and its ten principles but adherence to these principles is but one part of the, at times fluid, philosophical beliefs promoted by the farm itself and those held by the members and volunteers. As might be expected there are few major motivators in one's life that leads them to join a community farming project such as Feirm Bheag. And while I cannot pretend to be aware of every individual involved with the farm and their particular motivations I can be confident that a number of common ideals give impetus. The first of these is nutrition. Nutrition, the obtaining of food or nourishment, is the basic of needs. Take a glance at Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. While there are issues with some of Maslow's assumptions contained in his hierarchy his placement of food at the very foundation of his pyramid cannot be argued against. Without food we die. Even Aristotle, the great ancient Greek philosopher, had his two cents on the matter. What Aristotle calls the 'nutritive soul' is the most basic facet of the soul and without it life cannot function. As Polansky states in his analysis of the philosopher's "De Anima"; 'When Aristotle says that "living belongs to all" in virtue of it [nutritive soul], he means that nutritive capacity is the cause of life, at least life on the first basic level, for all ensouled beings' (2009, 203). Food that is good for the soul has a

somewhat different meaning today but in the Aristotelian sense food is indeed good for the soul and life itself. Without it life does not exist. Today the discourse and accompanying practices around nutrition is convoluted to put it mildly. From the bottomless pit that is fad diets to being inundated with personal trainer advertisements on YouTube and celebrity Instagram profiles pushing "scientifically proved" luminous vitamin concoctions nutrition has become a central pillar of food consumption in the neoliberal capitalist era. Food has moved from a basic necessity for material survival to a set of extremely commodified object each laden with a stratum of attributed meanings and perceived values. This is not a recent development but, like much of the world post industrial revolution, the commodification of food has accelerated at an unprecedented rate. As has been alluded to above nutrition as far as the CSA movement is concerned revolves primarily around one ideal; 'natural' food. We will deconstruct what 'natural' might mean later on but from the perspective of Feirm Bheag CSA a natural, and by extension a nutritious, food is one that is produced without the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides or subjecting the land it is grown or raised on to high intensity farming. Much like the anthroposophists and their Bio-dynamic farming the organic farming movement, which heavily influences the CSA's concept of nutritious organic food, began in the early 1900s. Created in opposition to the increasing prevalence of synthetic fertilizers organic farming was a response to the suspected creation of less nutritious, mass-produced food chock-full of ominously named chemicals. Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DTT) anybody? The concept of nutrition is a loaded one at Feirm Bheag. This is something it shares with the organic, slow, local food movement at large. Nutritious obviously does refer to the physical make-up of the food item itself, from the levels of fats, protein, carbohydrates, sodium and so on to the absence of chemical or biological additives. But nutritious also carries another, more subtle, value. This is the equating of nutritious good with natural and positive for the environment. It is although the food itself gains an additional quality of nutrition due to its perceived lesser impact on the world around it as it is produced at the CSA. It is not unusual for the concepts of nutritious and low environmental impact to be conflated but I do not think that is what happened. Listening to members as the conversed on harvest pick-up days tell a different story. One cannot write about community farming in any capacity without mentioning the relationship these projects have with global climate change. As one of, if not the most, pressing set of problems facing all of humanity and much of the non-human population on the planet today, the discourse around the human impact on the natural world is never far from one's lips. The ever worsening effects of climate change were a concern for many at the CSA. To highlight this, environmental stewardship, the second tenet, is written into Feirm Bheag's constitution. By being involved in the farm it is expected that one subscribes to the understanding that cohesion with the environment is of the utmost importance. Alongside nutrition an awareness of, and willingness to engage with, the climate crisis was evident throughout my fieldwork experiences. However, the awareness of and engagement with subjects around climate change varied greatly among members and volunteers. I will raise an interesting point here that we will return to in chapter 3. The variation of concern relating to the local environment and the planet more generally was

not entirely random among the CSA community. In fact, it was possible to identify where the split in favouring nutrition over environmental stewardship and vice versa generally occurred. It could be found on the line between member and volunteer. There were people who inhabited both spheres of course. I have already stated that the motivations for volunteering, becoming a paying member, or taking part in both were diverse but nonetheless there existed a surprising and noticeable difference discourse between the two groupings. The third of the key ideological tenets is that of community building. A sense of community is key to the formation and continued existence of a CSA. Without a community to support it, a CSA simply cannot function. This community can be constituted in two ways, through the geographical community surrounding the location of the CSA or through the creation of a cultural community not bound by a specific geographic location. The community of Feirm Bheag is composed of, like most things in life, somewhere in between these two forms of community. While I would situate it as a cultural community, many of the people involved with the farm, member, volunteer or head farmer, live within a short distance from the site. That being said there are those who come from further afield, Tina, a volunteer, hailed from the neighbouring county of Offaly. A sense of community was incredibly important to Mia, the head farmer. There is little doubt that the main priorities for the majority of the members of the farm encompassed the three tenets, but environmental stewardship gave way to the other two, firmly planting it below the desire for good nutrition and community building. The most common themes to come up in the majority of conversations concerned one or both of nutrition or community building. To quote Aryn, an avid member, volunteer, and former steering committee member, *'Our primary purposes are not to provide food for our members, but also to be a community, you know. And part of our thinking was, because I suppose all the core members would be very aware of the possibility of collapse, of climate breakdown, you know, that we're basically living on a knife's edge that most people are unaware of, and that anything could happen.'*

Food

'To be human, one must eat'.

Belasco 2008, 52.

Fig.7: A Menagerie of Tomatoes

Let us now spend a little time discussing the theme of food in general before we move on to some of the minutia of Feirm Bheag's relationship with the food it produces. Feirm Bheag's primary function is to grow produce after all. Food has been a central pillar of anthropological enquiry since the late 19th century. The real grunt work was carried out throughout the 20th century. Some notable examples are Boas' early work documenting of Kwakiutl recipes for salmon in his 1921 "Ethnology of the Kwakiutl", Levi-Strauss' "culinary triangle" (2008) and the seminal text "Purity and Danger" by Mary Douglas in 1966. Since then the area of food, in all of its variety, has in the words of Mintz and Du Bois; 'matured enough to serve as a vehicle for examining large and varied problems of theory and research methods.' (2002, 100). Food is a juggernaut of meaning making, we all relate to food in a multitude of ways. Food can serve as ritualistic ingredient, as vessel for memories or as powerful political symbol. Food in the most general of senses is one of the few things that serves a number of universal functions for humanity regardless of culture. The variations within this universal are countless but food in essence serves similar purposes for people across the planet.

Real vs Processed

As has been eluded in the preceding passages there was regular lively discussion between participants as to why the food produced on Feirm Bheag was of superior quality to the supermarket equivalent. A comment made by a number of people during these conversations piqued my interest, the idea that the food grown on the farm was in some sense more "real" than the food products bought from a store. This question of what amounts to "real" food is not new (O'Sullivan, 2018), but I would like to readdress in the context of the CSA and hopefully tease out some novel findings specific to this community. The term "processed" is one that is heavily laden with primarily negative connotations not only from those staunchly against food that is not locally and organically produced but more generally as well. If we look back to the post-war years in the mid-twentieth century processed food was perceived in a mostly positive light in the West at least if we take broad strokes across history. There are many examples of unease with overly processed foodstuffs over the same period of time not to mention the founding of the teikei movement in the 1960s and the biodynamic and organic movements originations some 15-20 years before the outbreak of the Second World War. A prime example worth looking at here is that of processed bread as it encapsulates feelings on both sides of the fence. The historical context I am going to provide is primarily from the United States in the post war period but there are interesting contrasts that can be drawn from it when paired with contemporary Irish attitudes toward bread and its production. We first look to Bobrow-Strain's article, "Making White Bread by the Bomb's Early Light" (2011). Focusing on the introduction, production and marketing of the first industrially mass-produced white breads in the United States, Bobrow-Strain argues that the new bread 'might not have tasted as good as French baguettes or contained the natural nutrients of Soviet "black bread", as many consumers readily acknowledged, but, unlike those other breads, they were fortified, plentiful, and cheap' (2011,77). Industrially mass-produced bread was a symbol of capitalist superiority over the Communists of the Soviet Union, at least to the Americans in the United States. In time, the fear of communism has subsided, this no doubt aided by the collapse of the Soviet Bloc in 1989, albeit pockets do exist, in the United States particularly. And with the fading worries of an unstoppable red wave the cultural defences set up to counter it have too dissipated. In the West today it would be hard to convince many people that mass-produced "Wonder Bread" was a healthy diet choice. In fact, the superiority that white bread once held in the minds of Westerners has been turned on its head. Concerns today are now more centred on what goes into making the bread, and food in general, more so than its powers to stay the tide of the communists. With bread in particular the emphasis today is on what ingredients and methods are used to produce a loaf, whether it is plain white bread, sourdough, whole wheat, whole grain, or gluten free. A rule of thumb I was taught was the longer the list of ingredients,

preservatives, and E numbers on the packaging, the less likely it was a healthy choice. That is not to say that people today are more aware of what goes into their food, they might very well be, but as evidenced by the genesis of the multiple organic movements issues with industrial food production have been voiced for some time.

The process behind the food at Feirm Bheag could be seen and it could be acted on. The creation of that pumpkin or this kale was not passive. The objects on the farm did not simply pop into existence on to a store shelve without a history. They were storied creations whose existence could be attributed to a flesh and blood person. This undoubtedly strongly influenced the feelings of what was real and what was not as real. Stories, especially those told first-hand, can be incredibly powerful. Stories that involve an entire community whether each member is directly or indirectly involved are influential within that group. This type of story creation and storytelling was a fundamental component of the Feirm Bheag imaginary. The power of a storied item is not lost on more traditional industrial scale food production, marketing teams the world over have known this since the inception of marketing as a concept. Take a look at most food products today and you will be treated to the same small set of stories. How this tea bag comes from some of the finest tea plantations in India with which the tea brand's family has resided on for generations. How if you buy this milk alternative you're helping this company save the planet from certain doom, or if you buy this fillet of beef you're helping a famer just like Jim who face is plastered on the front packaging. If one was to look at these from a purely cynical perspective, of which I am regularly guilty of, it is not difficult to come to the conclusion that all any of these messages are is marketing attuned to the contemporary zeitgeist.

I caught myself on a number of occasions remarking to Mia how the things we grew were "real" food. What I meant when I said this I am still not totally sure but it certainly has to do with the intimate involvement I found myself a part of. Many of the plants that I assisted in harvesting during our harvest season I had helped care for. From the tiny seedling stage in the small polytunnel I was part of the nurturing process. I would watch the seedlings grow, their leaves growing larger, their roots growing longer, until it was time to move them out into the plots. I would dig the holes, specific to the needs of the young plant, and once established keep them watered. A routine of watering would keep me in close contact with the plants until, months later, they bore fruit at which point I would harvest the produce. The things, be they tomatoes or leeks, had an essence of a greater reality. The reality of food is set in opposition to a number of things, the most obvious being food that is in some way processed be that simply being industrially harvested or something more artificial such as the inclusion of additives or the use of plastic packaging. Processed has a wide variety of meanings but for my research participants it appeared to come down to two in particular, the process of plastic packaging and the

process of additives. I believe there is a third, the "cyclical temporal process", in which the cyclical-ness of the CSA experience (seeds transforming into plants, the repeated harvesting of plants) is set apart from the static-ness of the supermarket. However, this process was not as articulated as the other two, yet, as we will see in chapter 4, it was something people were aware of. Returning to the "process of plastic packaging", it is relatively straightforward. The use of plastic, be that a container or cling film, was seen in an extremely negative light. The plastic contaminated the food it contained in both a physical and symbolic way. The very real danger of microplastics aside the disposable plastic used in most fruit and vegetable packaging was considered yet another faux pas on top of the already unknown origins of the plastic's contents. There is somewhat of a contradiction when it comes to plastic packaging however. Earlier it was stated how Feirm Bheag had at one point employed the use of disposable plastic containers. While every effort was made by the farm to reuse the containers, the material from which they were made was not what one would call sturdy. The containers would usually crumple the first chance they got. And while the farm would turn away from these containers for a time, instead using compostable paper bags, for some of the produce but primarily the tomatoes there was little choice but to use the plastic.

The "process of additives" is a more complicated concept than that of packaging. This is for three reasons. Firstly, and I believe most importantly, unlike a plastic container one cannot see something added to a food not unless you're present when it is mixed together. Secondly, what is considered an unacceptable additive and what is consider an acceptable additive varies from person to person and the qualifiers can change through time and space. Thirdly, the naming of additives creates suspicion of particular ingredients. The naming of ingredients is not something that was raised often in conversation but it is clear to see how the naming practices of ingredient lists can influence what is considered a tolerable additive. The issue around additional ingredients, be they "artificial" or not, is multi-layered as the inability to see what is added to a food combined with a suspicion of unfamiliar or clinical sounding names creates a nexus of what is suitable to eat and what is not. But a process in of itself does not necessarily carry a negative connotation. The stories the food from Feirm Bheag carry include their own fair share of different processes that occur throughout the production cycle. These processes enhance the reality of the food instead of detracting from it unlike packaging and additives. These include the training of plants, the use of organic and some chemical fertilisers, the measured spacing and specific placement of plants. So what makes these processes acceptable compared to the two discussed above? This can be put down to two interwoven aspects. The question of what is considered natural versus unnatural and a question of degrees of separation. We'll tease out both of these now looking at the point on degrees of separation first. I've already mentioned the concept of low-mileage or low-carbon food and this feeds into the degrees of separation that make the processes that are carried out on the CSA acceptable to the farmer, volunteers and the members who are concerned at a similar

level. The food produced at Feirm Bheag is in most regards low-carbon food. Once produced it doesn't need to travel from the farm to a middleman and then to the consumer instead it goes from farm to consumer. This exchange also happens at the farm so the food rarely leaves the farm in the hands of anyone other than the intended consumer. Thus the end produce that is the fruit and vegetables are themselves extremely low carbon creators. The physical closeness to the food as it grows and bears fruit ensures there is never a point at which the plants are somewhere far away or unknown. The degrees of separation between the food, the farmer and the consumer members when compared to the supermarket experience is minuscule.

What is natural versus what is not is something we will return a number of times. It is something we will get into more in-depth later on but it is worth noting here that the CSA is fundamentally unnatural. Agriculture is not the "natural" state of the world, it is a cultural construction. Of course, there is a spectrum with CSA type projects, or farms that employ methods such as permaculture, attempting to 'get back to nature' as best they can. But ultimately, the aim of 'getting back to nature' as many involved with alternative agriculture practices perceive it is something that will never be achievable. As no matter how close one might get to returning a piece of land or local environment to a 'natural' state when this involves agriculture of any kind, a practice that is human and artificial to its core, the concept of 'natural' in this sense goes out the window.

We've now got some idea of what is meant by "real" food, although this would appear to be a concept in a state of some flux at all times. Food as symbol(s) is something of an analytical honeypot for ethnographers with food and ritual being intertwined since the discipline's inception centuries ago. It remains a staple of anthropological enquiry albeit different in some ways to what our discipline's founders may have considered. The symbolism of the produce on Feirm Bheag is heavily invested in the physicality of the objects themselves. While symbolism and the physical object generally shares a symbiotic relationship this symbiosis was very one sided. The symbol was generated in the physical world through the object and this informed the abstract. There must be, of course, some sort of feedback loop but participants would tend to link the food itself to something opposite, abstract, dangerous, and far away, e.g. the processes.

> '*You know, gong to the grocery story is easy. You know, a lot of us were born into this model where you just go to the grocery store, buy whatever you need, It doesn't matter if it was imported from China, Spain, Venezuela, Argentina. Whatever, you just go to the grocery store and get it. That's really easy. So I can understand why and it's cheap. And I understand why people don't*

you know, just don't join a CSA for this reason, they just go to the store. So I think part of it is the issue like really getting people on board with, you know, like understanding why the model of the supermarket is dangerous for the planet and why a CSA is important.'

- Avery

Rose-Tinted

Fig.8: Heal the Planet

There has always been a longing for the past in times of uncertainty. Perhaps this longing is always there for some. When we do not know what will come of us in the present we look to what came before for comfort and inspiration. Sometimes back in our own lives or of living memory, sometimes as far back as 8,000 BCE. Since at least the 1800s, as we saw with Howard's 'Garden City', people have been yearning for a return to an imaginary slower paced agrarian-styled way of life. The intensity of this yearning has undoubtedly increased steadily over the last 200 years or so. This is for a myriad of reasons but these can be split into two overarching connected assemblages, neoliberal capitalism and global climate change. CSAs might have their origins in the 1960s but much of the reference today to the reasons why CSAs are a good thing are based on the advent of neoliberalism in the 1980s. Climate change is not a new concept either, coined in the mid-20th century as global warming global climate change is the single largest existential crisis humanity has ever faced. The planetary scale of the

Anthropocene has convinced many that the current "business as usual" approach to production and consumption is simply not sustainable and so alternatives are needed. The need for alternatives to neoliberalism and the worst producers of pollution of global proportions has pushed like-minded people toward projects like Feirm Bheag. Along with the need however, a belief that these low carbon, environmentally conscious local projects are a return to the past is also carried. This past is, for the most part, a figment of the collective imaginary. Rose-tinted, this past is generally depicted as a time before large fossil fuel burning machines, before the internet, before capitalism. It is agrarian where people live in close-knit communities that live off what the local land provides and do not need to travel in large metropolises each day for work. Yet there is still access to clean water, accessible food for all, and peace between communities. It is an imagined past where, for better or worse, the last few hundred (or thousand) years never happened. For those that yearn for this imaginary past the CSA offers a foretaste. It offers the possibility, if only the slimmest, that their imagined past can be reconstructed in the present and near future. And one could make the argument that seeing the seasonal transformation of Feirm Bheag a glimpse of this imagined past, present, and future is made manifest.

With the advent of modern globalisation everything changed albeit slowly at first. Its history is one of fierce debate and murky solutions with theories ranging as far back to the aforementioned Silk Road, while some place an emphasis on the Spanish and Portuguese expeditions to the Americas in the 14th century. Others would claim what we know as the phenomenon of globalisation today only took shape in the post-war world of the mid-20th century. There is little, as per usual with theories of this magnitude, agreement on what can be definitively labelled as the beginning of the encompassing system of globalisation we live in today. But what we can all agree on is that globalisation is here now and, for the foreseeable future, here to stay in one form or another. Local community initiatives are at their core the antithesis to the globalising project. Intentionally rallying against globalising processes creeping in on all sides the CSA forms part of a larger network of independent resistances against the current socio-economic world order. On the part of Feirm Bheag this is a very conscious resistance which must constantly protect its metaphorical and physical borders from incursions. The threat of the abstract menace of globalisation was not something different to imagine for my research participants. The farm was permanently under threat from outside interests, not for the farm itself but the rather valuable industrially zoned, county council owned land it sat on. It was relayed to me by Ken early on in my fieldwork that Feirm Bheag did not enjoy the security of a long-term lease for the land the council had given. The lease did not even span a year instead being renewed every 11 months at the discretion of the county council. It had been this way since the CSA's inception in 2012 and remained so until mid-way through my fieldwork in 2019. I am not privy to the exact details of how the county council came to the decision of replacing the recurring lease with an recurring license for the land but this decision was anything but effectively communicated to the CSA. What the exact differences between

the prior lease and the license, which the farm is under today, are is somewhat lost on me still. What I could glean from discussion was that whatever this license was it came with less guarantees and security than the lease, making an already precarious existence that much more so. I will return to the lease and license in chapter 2.

In late 2019 the land beside Feirm Bheag went up for sale. Not that we at the CSA had any right to receive any warning but the land going up for sale came as a bit of a shock as it had lay unused for many years. The large industrial plot sold within the space of a couple months and with this so did the rumours as to who had bought the land and what their plans were for it. A rumour I had heard early on was that a new petrol station was to be constructed, others had heard a number of new car dealerships. Being beside the motorway these possibilities made a lot of sense. Both of these options would also be very unwelcome additions to an already increasingly industrial landscape as far as many of my research participants were concerned. As the heavy machinery and construction material slowly trickled onto the site it soon became apparent the building would be neither of these. What ended up on the site was a rather large but non-descript warehouse for the housing and maintenance of aircraft parts.

Feirm Bheag, a Real Farm?

The potentially misplaced rose-tinted-ness of many alternative agriculture movements, including the CSA model and Feirm Bheag, is a regular criticism raised by what many consider the conventional[6] agriculture industry. In Ireland, a country well renowned for its agricultural produce in contemporary times, be that beef or dairy there is an image of what a farm should be. A farm should have herds of animals or large expanses of grains. A farmer should have a number of heavy machines at *his* disposal. Above all, a farm should not be a small 1 acre plot with a few vegetables. One particular example of this attitude comes to mind. Mia had received an enquiry from a group of people interested in setting up a community garden in the south of Dublin City. They were interested in visiting the farm and wanted to bring along some residents of the area where the proposed community garden would be situated. Of course, Mia was more than happy to have them visit the farm and so a date was set. Fast forward a couple of weeks it was a quiet mid-week day on the farm on a rather blistery January morning at the beginning of 2020. Only Mia and myself were at the farm so as the a van pulled up along the drive way Mia went out to greet the noticeably loud visitors but only after, to Mia's and my annoyance, the group had had their 20 minute tea and sandwich break. I, who had been prepping the first seedlings

[6] Conventional in only one sense of the word of course. What is considered "conventional" changes over time.

of the year, left the small polytunnel to greet the newcomers after Mia had introduced herself. After briefly greeting them I returned to the polytunnel so as to let Mia bring the group on a tour. As I busied away filling seed racks with compost then placing one or two seeds in each slot and then sealing the seeds in with a bit more soil, I attempted to focus my hearing on Mia's presentations and the responses from the visitors. Everything sounded like it was going well. Although Mia never practiced her performances she knew the farm so intimately she didn't have to. What I did not pick up on was her growing frustration with the group and with one man in particular. Just over an hour after arriving the group departed. I emerged from the polytunnel briefly to exchange pleasantries and wave them goodbye. The van had not gotten to the end of the drive way when Mia opened up about her irritation with the visitors. The concept of a CSA had been lost on many of them as far as she was concerned and their comments that she relayed to me appeared to back up that conviction. The one man in particular that had generated the most consternation had openly questioned whether Feirm Bheag was a farm at all. He had claimed as there were no animals Feirm Bheag was clearly not a 'real' farm and questioned why the group had come here at all. The man's friends had attempted to quieten him down after he first aired his opinions but this did not stop him from repeatedly expressing his views on the matter throughout Mia's tour. This had left her visibly angry; I too felt some personal affront. With all the work we had put into the farm over the last few months, especially with it only being the two of us for much of that time, for someone to arrive and made a sweeping judgement such as that was not something either of us looking kindly upon. This example is but one manifestation of what I would consider a mild antagonism between perceptions of industrial commercial agriculture and those of alternative practices. But the antagonisms do not end at the presence, or lack thereof, of animals. If it isn't critiques over the types of produce, it is a critique of scale or one of intention.

Critiques of scale are rather straightforward. With the small sizes that constitute the majority of CSA farms, are they capable of producing a worthwhile amount of food for a sizable population? A common concern of small-scale agriculture is the effectiveness of it at producing food for large populations, especially in urban areas. Ireland tends to favour large farms that can produce large quantities of food for both export and domestic sales. In the conventional farming section, small farms tend to struggle to be economically viable due to low prices and rely heavily on government supports. In Ireland, there is a history of land being split up among the children of a farmer, especially before the famine. In some cases, this was done to the point that the portions of land that remain after a number of generations were practically useless. The 50 share capacity[7] of Feirm Bheag would be considered tiny, if not totally insignificant, by many larger mainstream farms in Ireland, some of which are made up of thousands of acres. Even at optimal production, Feirm Bheag's share system regularly struggles to provide for the

[7] The share capacity was raised to 60 shortly after I completed my fieldwork.

50 member shares, let alone provide for a sizable segment of the town's population. The intentions of the CSA model, including Feirm Bheag, are sometimes and in some cases rightfully pondered. By intentions I mean who is the CSA intended for and what is the intended purpose. While this is not a critique that I have come across from external sources outside of Feirm Bheag, it is a concern of some of my participants who volunteered at the farm. During my time at the CSA, I also considered questions around the purpose of the farm and their goals, and how these might be achieved in both practical and more abstract terms. Questioning the aims of the CSA should not be taken as an overly negative critique, instead it is more a question of whether Feirm Bheag and the CSA model in general is living up to the expectations of the model.

Ethical Consumption?

A concept that is worth considering here is that of "ethical consumption". A rather straightforward idea ethical consumption is the collective term for movements or actions that intend to consume food, clothes, energy, and so on, in ways that are environmental, better support the producers or farmers, generally avoiding mainstream, produced things. Ethical consumption sounds great on paper and it cannot be denied that through actions such as sponsoring a CSA, taking the bus instead of the car, or installing solar panels at home have positive effects. But the reality of ethical consumption is not this simple, as Pratt and Luetchford (2013) says; 'critics of ethical consumption argue that it stays within the neoliberal paradigm of individual choice in the marketplace, and deflects attention from the structural processes which create the 'unethical' reality' (2013, 182). In other words a criticism levelled against ethical consumption practices claims that the practice itself never actually breaks free of neoliberal forces instead relying on some of the same fundamental properties of neoliberal doctrine. The example of the farmers' market presented by DeMuynck (2019), exemplifies this issue. She opens her analysis with 'buying locally produced food and crafts are often thought of as both enjoyable and the right thing to do' (2019, 3). Going to a farmers' market is generally considered the ethical choice when compared to that of the large-scale chain supermarket and in some ways it may very well be but, as DeMuynck points out, the famers' market 'cannot be disentangled from ongoing patterns of urban growth and the redevelopment in the neoliberal era', much the same can be said of Feirm Bheag. For DeMuynck, the criticism raised by Pratt and Luetchford (2013) is valid when applied to the customers of the farmers' market, this "green middle class" whereby individual purchase choices give the impression of being ethical, 'thus relieving the government from responsibility and also averting collective action' (2019,4). One could argue that the CSA model is one of collective action and this to a certain extent is true but the model still relies on the fundamental principle of individual purchase power, with the emphasis put on individual action over that of a state or other governing body. As we

will see in the next chapter the potential pitfalls of individual ethical consumption are very much present for Feirm Bheag in similar ways to that of the farmers' market. Ethical consumption is at risk from an even more insidious phenomenon, marketing. In fact through a process that Žižek (2009) coins 'cultural capitalism', ethical consumption is continually co-opted by corporations through various forms of marketing to appeal to ethically minded customers. This is nothing new as over the last couple of decades many a company has come to the realisation that there is money to be made in appealing to the burgeoning mindsets that have come to encompass ethical consumption, from environmentalism (e.g. buy from us and we will plant a tree) to the existential poverty experienced by many in the world (e.g. buy from us and we will donate a pair of our shoes). That is not to say there is no benefit at all to these sorts of "ethical" shifts but to take them at face value is a dangerous thing to do. Much like individual choices promoting a version of ethical consumption through practices like planting trees can muddy the waters and allow other potentially destructive practices to go unnoticed or simply excused.

With ethical consumption there is another topic of conversation that I have come across. Although I did not collect much data on the particular issue there was a discourse over the certain level of animosity between industrial farming and alternative agriculture. It was also something I only explicitly came across when speaking with a representative of the Irish Farmers' Association (IFA). Much like the negative feelings toward industrial farming from the alternative agricultural movement at large, while not a critique in the sense of the previous two, a perceived sense of superiority of alternative agriculture toward the mainstream farming system seems to have created rifts between the two. Much like the organic movement, the locavore movement of which CSA style projects are a part is generally perceived as something that is beyond the means of "normal people". "Normal people" here can mean many things depending on who one asks but for the sake of moving forward we can say normal equates to someone who does not have the disposable income to spend on the annual fees required to join a CSA. This perception is likely compounded by the likes of restaurants and grocery shops that boast of their use of locally grown food to which they usually attach a premium.

As an aside, as it was mentioned in the above story of the sceptical visitor there is an obvious feeling held by some people that a farm without livestock is not really at farm at all. This raises questions of urban food growing itself and the antagonisms toward it from mainstream industrial farming. But this is by no means a one-way criticism with members and volunteers of Feirm Bheag regularly disparaging rural small and large farm holdings that were part of the of the main Irish agricultural industry. This I believe could be connected to wider themes of vegetarianism and veganism and their friction with mainstream non-diet specific diets. Vegetarianism and veganism, along with flexitarianism, pescatarianism and many others, have become more acceptable dietary choices in the West over the last

couple of decades. But, whether through feeling of guilt or other motivations, many people still harbour disdain over others who choose meat-free or animal produce-free diets. The friction created by these diets and their supporters is felt no stronger than in the mainstream commercial farming sector. While many larger industry players in Ireland now try to appeal to the vegetarian and vegan markets, Ireland's beef and dairy sectors are in direct contravention of these diets and their adherents. These two groups have, understandably, very little time for each other. Beef and dairy industries are consistently targeted as problem industries and the farmers involved with beef and dairy always feel that they must defend themselves. In an interview with a former Irish Farmer's Association (IFA) president, this conflict was heavily underlined. Joe Healy, who surprisingly enough allowed an anthropologist volunteering on a majority vegetarian/vegan farm interview him described to me where the defensive posture of the beef and dairy farmers came from. From listening to him describe this, I came to the conclusion that it appeared that the criticisms of alternative agriculture come from a place of deep-seeded fear. Healy painted a sympathetic image of the beef and dairy farmers and in many respects, I agree with his beliefs. To put his point briefly, '*Don't get me wrong for one second, plants, vegetables, you know, they have in any diet, they have an important role to play. But equally, we would say that in any diet meat and dairy products have an important role to play.*' While Healy respected other peoples' choices to adhere to a vegetarian or vegan diet, he was not inclined to agree that it was the best course of action. Over the course of our short conversation he went on to explain the predicaments of dairy and beef farmers both who harbour a general feeling of being demonised due to primarily the blame being placed on their industries for a sizeable chunk Ireland's carbon footprint, but also because they farm livestock. Of course it could be said that as the president of the IFA it is possible that there may have been some level of bias at work. While nothing Healy explicitly said was overly critical of the idea of alternative agriculture when I broached the subject he seemed less than convinced of their viability. From where I was sitting it was not difficult to get the sense that Healy was somewhat sceptical of the idea of an alternative small holding farm in general, much less one that (at least for quite some time) did not involve the rearing of animals.[8]

Commons

'Historically, the commons have been associated with a record of resilience, collective governance and sustainability. They provide an inspirational narrative based on solid moral grounds. Commons thinking offers a counter-claim to the idea that society is and should be composed of atomized individuals, acting as rational agents seeking to maximize their individual utility and competing against

[8] Feirm Bheag has at one stage reared pigs but this was some time before my fieldwork. There were, however, chicken eggs available most of the year.

other individuals in order to thrive as a separate individual rather than as a member of an ecological collectively' (Vivero-Pol 2019, 3-4)

The concept of commons has seen something of a resurgence in the urban and environmental anthropological disciplines as a subject of analysis. In practice, commons or the act of "commoning" has also enjoyed a renaissance of sorts, with Vivero-Pol et al attributing this as a 'reaction to the massive abuses visited upon nature and community' (2019,1), by dominant powers and structures. As a general definition, commons are considered any natural resource or space that is openly accessible to all and is not privately owned, although the term is extremely malleable. Food has a long and complicated history with the commons, with food production shifting in and out of being part of a commonage throughout the centuries. Mainstream agriculture in its contemporary format, as a producer of commodities for global consumption, is a relatively recent transformation. As Vivero-Pol et al state; 'From a historical perspective, treating food as a pure commodity devoid of other important dimensions is an anomaly. For centuries, food was cultivated in common and considered a mythological or sacred item; it was allocated to need, rather on the basis of the ability to pay' (2019, 4). The rose-tinted longing experienced by many today for an imaginary food system of the past directly links to the ideas around the commons. With my research participants at Feirm Bheag, there was a prevailing discourse on the subject of farming being something done by the community for the community before the advent of capitalism. While the historical facts are not as clear cut as "agriculture before capitalism" and "agriculture after capitalism", it is well known that from the Industrial Revolution up to the economic reforms of the Reagan and Thatcher era of the 1980s there have been dramatic changes to food production.

Commons is a term that was noticeably absent from much of my fieldwork notes and conversations. Whether this was deliberate on the part of research participants or simply not part of Feirm Bheag's vocabulary I am unsure. When I began my research at the CSA I had expected the topic of the commons to be a common occurrence. Yet it was not. The conclusion that I came to in regard to this oddity is that a CSA is not truly a commons. For our purposes we will define the commons 'as a grassroots project to build a new form of consensus that highlights the importance of sharing, economic security, and horizontalism across thresholds of difference' (Susser 2017,1-2). Each part of this definition is where CSA projects run into a bit of trouble, especially when we look at the third part, for CSA is a system that appears to struggle greatly with crossing thresholds of difference. If we take "commoning" to be an act of rebellion (Holston 2019), so too is the formation of a CSA and so there is overlap here but when compared to the typical rebellious form of agricultural commoning, community gardens, there is a distinct lack of the horizontalism that Susser (2017) notes. Unlike a community garden a CSA is not radical in this way. A CSA relies on membership fees, so too do many community gardens but the

difference in cost is what sets them apart. If we look at the concept of city-occupying (Holston 2019), we do see more overlap specific to Feirm Bheag and commoning practices. City-occupying, whether it be physical or more immaterial in nature is another form of rebellion, of retaking and remaking a city, town or suburb. According to Susser's definition, a commons can also highlight and/or provide economic security. While this is true for the CSA model it is only in a limited sense confined to the economic security of the farmer or farmers in charge of running the farm day to day. Even then, at least in the case of Feirm Bheag, the economic security of the head farmer Mia was never a given. Thus, while the economic viability and security of the farm and farmer are important to the CSA model, they are limited in scope when compared to visions of the commoning. When we look to the topic of sharing or non-economic exchange (Bresnihan & Byrne 2015) we run into similar issues when considering the exchange of membership fees, if indirectly, for the produce of the farm. Ultimately I do not believe that Feirm Bheag, or the CSA model in general, fits snuggly into the commons categories. However they do share enough characteristics to be considering commoning in a broad sense as the 'the praxis of the commons' (2015, 47) is malleable and not set in stone. Similar to allotments, which are considered a prime example of urban food commoning, Feirm Bheag's 'desire to reconfigure lifestyles is expressed in their commitment to food commoning. They do this through such practices as substituting cultivated foods for processed foods, sharing the fruits of their labour with others on the site, and with family and friends' (Corcoran, Kettle & O'Callaghan 2017, 321). The CSA's existence rests on imagination, for it is new imaginings that create and sustain the movement as a whole. While arguably not a commons, the concept of commoning offers much when it comes to the role of imagining.

The Doughnut

If we accept that the CSA is not a true form of commons, then perhaps we are required to define another economic system that the movement may belong to. One could argue that this isn't required as proponents of the CSA system usually contend that the model itself is apolitical and tied to that there is usually some claim of a-economics or economy-agnosticism. As we have seen neither are really the case as the model is actively political through its existence and there is the presence of economic exchange primarily through membership fees. I will admit that these membership fees are not considered as in direct exchange for the produce but at the same time there is a system of economic activity taking place. This is not to mention the classic exchange of money for goods in relation to the purchase of produce from other farms to supplement the shares when required. I contend that the best fit for our analysis is the concept of "Donut" economics. Donut economics is, according to Golias (2019) 'an economic construct that emphasises a balance between social and environmental outcomes, while remaining inclusive of other alternative approaches…"Doughnut Economics" describes the

pressing contemporary need for a type of economy that addresses human aspirations with environmental bounds' (2019,609). While Golias is promoting the donut model as an alternative for the overarching Western system of economics, and for design research for applied anthropologists, Feirm Bheag offers an example of this model at the real life micro scale. In fact, the CSA goes somewhat further in relation to Golais' "environmental bounds", with the staunchest supporters of the farm's ethos putting the environment and its limits beyond their own human aspirations. The doughnut model economy requires us to 'treat the economy like the ecosystem it is, rather than like a single mathematical function [Growth], which it cannot be' (2019, 610). While I will not get into the mechanics of the system, Feirm Bheag clearly treats its own economy like an ecosystem the strict limit on membership numbers being a prime example of this.

CSA and Imagination

This brings us to the final discussion point of this chapter, the imagination. Our discussion of the agricultural imagination will develop as we go along and so this section here will serve as simply a general introduction. The human imagination will feature throughout the proceeding chapters culminating in the final chapter 'Beyond the Human & Assembling Alterity'. For now, as has been the theme of the introduction and much of this chapter, I only want to introduce you to the conversation on the imagination to be had. We touched on it briefly in a previous section with the 'imaginary' rose-tinted past some in the CSA are attempting to return to. But the imagined world that inhabits the CSA is far larger and is inspired by a broad range of influences ranging from a place in the imagined past to the possibilities in a multitude of parallel imaginary futures. While each and every one of us rely on our imaginations on a daily basis, the people attracted to alternative projects most certainly engage with their imagination as a tool for thinking about new or novel ways of doing something. While the imagination is a difficult thing to measure in any real sense, the barometer I use is simply the level of discourse surrounding topics that directly engaged one's creative mind whether through imagined alternative scenarios or reference to alterities already in existence, both real and fictional. There will be the inclusion of theory but this barometer is what I will rely on for much of the discussion of the role of the imagination in relation to my research participants throughout this essay.

But let's return to that unassuming gate. As I am writing this I have passed that gate hundreds of times, not really noticing it for the most part except the times I would close it at the end of the day. But this gate, grey, metal and unassuming as it may be is the literal and figurative gate to the reality of the CSA. Once you pass this gate you are welcomed into a different way of seeing and thinking about the world.

A different way of seeing things and a different way of doing things. One that doesn't always snuggly fit into the mainstream, one that for better or for worse forces you to question if the mainstream way of doing agriculture is really the best way out there. But it asks more questions than just those limited to agriculture, horticulture or permaculture. As we make our way into Chapter 2, 'Suburbia, Community, and Growth', will we begin to unravel some of these initial questions. There will be also questions asked of the CSA, as we look at the relationships between those who involve themselves with Feirm Bheag, the contradiction of growth and the suburban world the farm must exist within.

Spring

Chapter II: Suburbia, Community & Growth

"The condition upon which God hath given liberty to man is eternal vigilance".

- *John Philpot Curran*

Communities are fragile things. Whether they be social, cultural, or geographical, much like plants, communities require particular conditions to survive. Conditions that if not maintained will see a community degrade and eventually, if there is no intervention, collapse. This is an eternal battle that communities of all shapes and sizes must fight, but it is especially true for smaller groups that sit outside of the mainstream, like Feirm Bheag. This is no easy battle to win either, and for there to be survival, sacrifice is unavoidable. For the CSA, the toll for survival is high, requiring both ideological and tangible sacrifice. It is the price of existence and it is what this chapter will focus on. Admittedly, this all sounds awfully dramatic so let us bring it down to Earth a little bit. There is a trio of interrelated concepts that will help us understand the struggles faced by Feirm Bheag in terms of maintaining their own existence: community, growth and the suburbs (city). Community and growth are in a constant struggle with the suburbs, in a rather abstract but also physical sense, acting as the involved backdrop to this struggle.

Fig.9: Morning Share Preparation for the Harvest Day Ahead

Community

> '*When you make those connections in the community with the people who are kind of like minded or at least like, yeah, whatever coming to the same ideas and things. Then you build its energy and like, it grows.' – Niamh*

By community, I am referring to both the sense of it but also how it is created and maintained. The cultural community of the CSA is a vibrant one but is homogenous in some regards, mainly that of being middle class. While one could not call it particularly close-knit, for reasons I will discuss in a little while the community does contain smaller established groups. These groups may be centred around a common outlook on life, philosophy or have come to the CSA as a pre-existing group. In essence, what you have here is a number of smaller communities, quite unique in some ways but sharing some similar outlooks. The groups within the community I will loosely divide into two main clusters, that of the volunteers and that of the members. I have made this distinction before as I believe the divisions highlight the differences in expectations and experiences of the people involved within their respective groupings. There is much overlap between these two clusters and so dividing them into two is less so about the people in the clusters per se, it is more so about what they think and say. Let us start from the ground, the small groupings, and work our way up to the clusters. Once we have done that we can highlight the overarching commonalities. First of all we must again beat the dead horse. These small groupings are not totally separate from one another, in fact by dividing them up into seemingly distinct entities here is to somewhat warp the reality of the situation. Doing so is to simply allow us to unpack the various overlapping tendrils of belief that criss-cross between them. With that noted let us move on. Much like in chapter 1 where we discussed the main reasons why someone might join a project such as Feirm Bheag, here we find ourselves looking at a similar set of notions. The small foundational groupings fall along lines of motivation be they of a philosophical, physical, or social in nature. As mentioned each of these are connected to and inform each other. If we take the socially motivated camp first what we will see is the broadest of the groupings, those primarily motivated by the sense of community. The majority of both the members and volunteers would fall into this group but there are those who would not label being part of a CSA community as a primary concern. Those who place in the physical category tend to prioritise nutrition and the environment. These are two big pull factors for many who involved themselves with the farm, with nutrition being by far the largest motivator of all. And then we have the philosophical or what might be better labelled as spiritual. This grouping was far more evident among the volunteer research participants, with explicit reference to participants own spiritual beliefs and how they inform their relationship with the non-human world and vice versa. But a general sense of spiritual connection to the environment was something not uncommon among the wider membership. When we move up a level and look at the two clusters of member and volunteer, there is a slighter clearer split between the small groupings. Firmly in the

member cluster you will find nutritionally and socially minded groups while within the volunteer cluster environmental and spiritual concerns take precedence, although it is obviously not this clear cut.

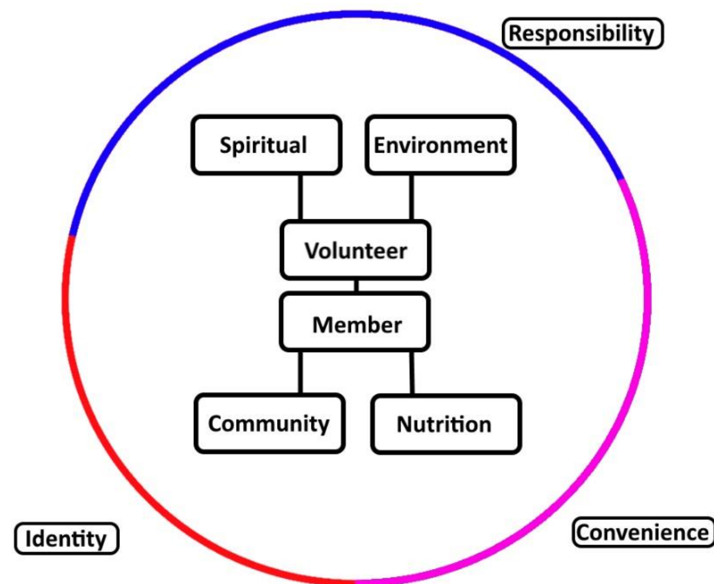

Fig.10: Reference Graph of Groupings

'We are [people generally] *are like when you go to self-checkouts, you know, everything is automated. Everything is at a distance and we totally forget that there's a process to follow. I think that's probably [what it is] like for a lot of members, like they just don't see that there's a process that needs to be like that and it's not like they're waiting for the vegetables but really, there could be value in them just going there* [Feirm Bheag] *and being a part of something to grow. I rarely get vegetables from the farm but I'm not there for that. No, I'm there so other people can benefit from it, and that's the value in it for me. You know, I suppose it's like, more like therapeutic or psychological.' – Tina*

'I floated the idea by my wife, and we were kind of interested but it was like we didn't have much money at the time. As she kind of got more and more into that [the idea]*, the option came up and them I switched to working at* [social media company] *and they gave everyone, like a COVID-19 bonus so* [we joined]*. And like she was initially sceptical because like, there's no schedule about what's coming when, yeah, you kind of just find out a few days before, the day or two before you go collect what's in the box. She's always constantly asking how come there's no like, there's no potatoes.' – Lucas*

'It brings you right into the moment and I think like the, the texture and feeling of the plants and the soil and the cold days and the hot days and being outside in the fresh air is super beneficial and then also like engaging with the plants and like not having ever really seen plants growing,

like not knowing what a turnip looks like in the ground…I had no interest in diets and health and food or anything or where my food came from before I turned vegan. So it was this whole new exploration, like whoa, okay, I actually have no idea where my foods been coming from. So yeah, I get to like, see it happen here [Feirm Bheag] *now every week. Yeah, so that's why I started.*' – *Amy*

Belasco (2008) offers a useful triad that neatly ties together the motivations behind the food choices we make, responsibility, identity, and convenience. As is to be expected the triad is applicable to the groups describe withing Feirm Bheag. Convenience, the least of three applicable to the members of the CSA, is defined as 'variables such as price, availability, and ease of preparation, which are all related to the requirements of energy, time, labor, and skill' (2008, 9). Secondly there is identity which Belasco defines as the 'consideration of personal preference, pleasure, creativity, the sense of who and where you are' (2008, 8). Belasco places special important on responsibility which 'entails being aware of the consequences of one's actions – both personal and social, physiological and political' (2008,9). Convenience, identity, and responsibility, all pull at the individual toward different choices and sets of values, some stronger than others. Belasco likens it less of a triad, in which each part is somewhat equal, and more to a triangle in which responsibility is at the "apex" or of most importance. Not necessarily the most important for people when they are making their food choices but he argues responsibility is the most important because it should be what people think about. In practice, however, the decisions we make about what we eat consider all three, weighting our feelings of responsibility with our sense of identity and need for convenience.

Belasco correctly predicts that responsibility tends to be trumped by motivations of identity. Although a common imagined future that presented itself during conversations with my research participants was that of a global future ravaged by human accelerated climate change. This vignette being usually drawn by volunteers more so than members that I spoke with. The motivations of most of the volunteers to contribute to the CSA were directly linked to a fear of this potential future. One exception to this was Avery. When I asked Avery, a member of the steering group and paying member, why he decided to commit his time and money to Feirm Bheag his answer was simple; '*I'm super worried about the planet and I want to do whatever I can to help, you know. Reduce my footprint and reduce climate change as much as I can on an individual level.*' Avery, an American who had recently moved to Ireland with his family, had the most singular motivation to lessening his impact on climate change more than any other person I spoke with. This was something he recognised; '*I know this is not the mentality of a lot of people that are in the CSA, but yeah, actually pretty much it's specifically for the environment because I like the grocery store. I, you know, I've always enjoyed going to the grocery store, having everything, anything I want available, being able to cook whatever I want. I've always really enjoyed that, but now*

I know that it's harmful…I like the community. I like the people I've met. But it's a lot of work.' The conversation I had with Avery from which these quotes come from was illuminating as he explained the predicament of balancing an environmentally conscious lifestyle with what many of us in the West have become accustomed to. He highlighted the double edged blade of scarcity when it comes to relying on the food produced by the CSA; '*The veggies you get are delicious, but they're really random and you can't really make what you want to make. So there's some like serious lifestyle changes that are not easy and it is challenging for our family.*' To counter Avery's remarks somewhat, in offering a different perspective, that of Niamh, who readers will remember was another of the most avid volunteers at the farm, *'People who this is* [CSA] *just not fitting exactly right with, with the other systems* [traditional agriculture and commerce] *is that people expect a different service for their money. So they expect to pay for something and they'd be provided with a service and I think that's the mentality shift around these projects that needs to change because you're not paying for a service, you're an equal share holder in this project. I think that's the difference, yeah, we have a lot of people who are just expecting to be served.*'

Fig.11: Bagged Shares, Ready to be Collected

Addressing the wider CSA community on the island there is a CSA Network in Ireland. I often got the impression that the Network was more of a loose association than anything. Whether through my own explorations of their as of writing defunct website or through some of Mia's comments, the network didn't feature much in the goings on at Feirm Bheag. While Feirm Bheag did have a profile on the website, along with directions to the farm and out of date contact details, it was not the sort of website

that facilitated updates or other forms of content. Feirm Bheag relied on its own website, Facebook page and Instagram profile for exposure and keeping people informed of the goings on at the farm. These, along with word of mouth, were the primary ways in which Feirm Bheag kept in contact with its community and vice versa. That is not to say that there was never any cross-pollination between Feirm Bheag and other alternative agriculture projects, but they were somewhat limited. I can count 4 distinct instances of collaboration between Feirm Bheag and another group, however to my knowledge none of these were facilitated through the network instead through direct contact between the groups. The first of these was with another CSA not too far from where Feirm Bheag was situated. The agreement between the two mainly focused on the exchange of farming equipment alongside a looser agreement of an exchange of labour. This other CSA ceased to exist not long after I began my fieldwork so I was only made aware of it after the fact. The second instance of cooperation was the facilitation of a community farming group from Dublin's South city centre. The organiser of the community group on two separate occasions shipped out a number of community members to Feirm Bheag to learn about growing and looking after plants. I included a story from one of these visits above in the last chapter in which Mia had to defend Feirm Bheag as a "real farm". But this negative experience didn't dampen her enthusiasm for more visits from the community group, however, COVID-19 saw to it that these visits would be cut short. The third instance of collaboration is not one particular event, instead I am combining all the individual experiences that Mia, Kerry, some of the volunteers and some of the members had in their own time at other CSAs or other alternatives. One of the most commonly mentioned was Cloughjordan Ecovillage in Co. Tipperary. A well know eco project for both its enterprising spirit in the realm of eco-living and for its economic troubles, the ecovillage has played host to many a workshop or seminar since its creation in 2009. The fourth is the semi-regular help rendered by the local Men's Shed whose members would tend to their plot in the small section of the farm designated for members' and others' growing projects. From time to time, members from the Men's Shed would help out with a bit of carpentry or with construction supplies and tools. Yet none of these were facilitated by the CSA Network which at the time of writing appears to no longer have a presence either online or offline. Mia's consternation with the Network seemed to be more with this lack of engagement more so than with the any intrinsic quality of the Network itself. As to why the Network would appear to no longer exist may be a result of the independent nature at the core of CSA projects, yet this would be nothing more than an educated guess.

Escape

Eriksen (2016) highlights a term; "precariat". The precariat is those who live in a constant state of precariousness, not knowing if they will be economically secure next week let alone next year. These are the people who generally do not have a secure full-time job and so lack all the security having one

entails. They may have racked up substantial amounts of debt and be beholden to a system that makes it extremely difficult to rectify the situation. The precariat amounts to millions, if not tens of millions, of people all across the West. The numbers are even greater when one looks further afield. ‘To millions of people, the freedom of neoliberal deregulation, merely means insecurity and reduced autonomy’ (Eriksen, 2016, 14). It is not unreasonably to say that many who would be classed in the lower middle-class[9] (and middle-middle class?) are progressively becoming part of the precariat. The old adage, the rich get richer, the poor get poorer. It has been noted by many that the middle classes are continually shrinking (Alderson & Doran, 2013) with the disparity in wealth between the upper and upper-upper classes and the rest increasing, resulting in a more uneven distribution of wealth. People in the West, generally, are getting wealthier but this is marred by the increasing demands of a neoliberal economy. And of course, many are left behind to fall through the cracks. At Feirm Bheag one finds a situation representative of the larger societal movements between neoliberal ideologies and the precariat, a microcosm of sorts. Because as previously mentioned, there are to some extent distinct groupings of people within the community. One of the stark differences I could infer from observations was that of the, for all intents and purposes, upper middle class and the ever increasing lower and middle middle-class. Unsurprisingly the distinctions between these groupings is not clearly drawn along particular lines. But one can demarcate these groups somewhat by looking at those who are volunteers and those who are members. Albeit not a perfect system in any regard I found during my research that generally those who volunteered were not in the position to invest in a CSA membership while those members who would show up on the Saturday morning to collect their share appeared materially rather well off. While having a conversation with Lucas, a member and occasional volunteer, he informed me the only reason he joined the CSA was because his wife wanted good quality local produce and that he, thanks to his new job in a multinational tech company, had the money to burn. Conversely, discussions with a number of volunteers highlighted the want to become members but the price being a barrier for entry. Volunteers Amy and Niamh got around this by pitching in together to fund a single membership and as they lived together there was no need to split the share. Both arguably use the farm as an escape or refuge might be a more accurate description. But while most people, be they members or volunteers, come to the farm to retreat temporarily from life outside its borders the motivations behind this is not uniform. Regardless of what grouping(s) one might belong to the temporary reprieve from the everyday was certainly a motivator. There appears to be three fundamental motivations; escape from monotony, escape from reality and escape from present and/or future. It is obviously not this clear cut in reality and there is a fair amount of overlap and likely people who don’t fit into any of the three.

[9] I would like to acknowledge the fact that “middle class” can mean a plethora of things, mostly defined in vague terms. As the “middle class” expands, the possibility of defining it accurately diminishes also. With this said, the definition most likely suited to my use is that of “urban working professionals”.

It might seem obvious but for many the CSA is removed from the humdrum of normal urban life and so acts as a refuge of sort (Ableman, 2016). This is something that has been noted in the wider Irish context as well, as ‘allotments may be seen, not as political spaces for mounting a critique of capitalism, but rather as refuges that offer a temporary respite from the fall-out of the crash and the attendant austerity policies’ (Corcoran, Kettle & O’Callaghan 2017, 319). It is somewhere one can spend a few hours in a place they are not usually in, surrounded by things they are not usually around. This is undoubtedly a powerful pull factor for many in Feirm Bheag’s community, a number of participants said as much. The “natural” world acts as way of breaking away from the 9-5 job, the weekly school runs, sitting in traffic and suburban life in general. As we will see in chapter 4, Feirm Bheag breaks away from the linear temporality of capitalist society branching off into an alternate recursive[10] temporal experience, resulting in a bi-temporal existence. As Tina put it, ‘*there’s such an amazing energy there, and a will to provide something for a community that’s just a bit different, a little bit better*.’ There is a measure of rose-tinted-ness to this, one of the Marxist persuasion could even say the farm is fetishized to some extent. But the sense of reprieve is real, I myself experienced it on a number of occasions. For me, as a volunteer, the sense of refuge was not necessarily one of serenity due to the physical labour and time pressure involved in maintaining the farm but there was certainly a sense of calm. Whether this calming effect was the result of just being incredibly tired after a day’s work at the farm or was if fact something more intrinsic to the farm I am not sure, it was most likely a mixture of the two. It is also worth mentioning that there was a lot of fun had at the farm as well from running jokes to activities such as the hunt for the biggest lettuce (or any green leaf plant) when it came around to harvesting the leafy monsters. I even managed to take the crown for biggest cabbage on occasion.

[10] Recursive, unlike capitalist linear monotony.

Fig.12: The Biggest Lettuce Challenge Winner, July 2019

Closely related to the idea of a refuge from monotony is that of an escape from "reality". By reality here I mean the set of social and economic ties that a person might have, or in some cases the lack of them. Feirm Bheag, as mentioned in previous chapters, created a barrier of sorts to the outside world. One through which, for a short time, pre-existing socio-economic commitments can be side-lined. Although as also already noted, while side-lined, socio-economic standing is still very much in play albeit not necessarily in a conscious way. The break from "reality" was likened to "a place to think" or "breathing space" on numerous occasions. Giving people the time to be with their own thoughts instead of busy offices or traffic filled roads. For those members who were parents the CSA offered the additional benefits of showing their children how food grows, seeing it first-hand was certainly outside the realms of normality for many of the young children who would frequent the farm. It was remarked that for some parents bringing their children to Feirm Bheag allowed them to experience a world that could be. In other words, parents could show their children an alternate present, one of open fields and food straight from a farm, instead of prepacked and from a supermarket shelf. The CSA also served as an example of an alternative future to that of the parents' imaginations. While monotony and reality are related to physical phenomena, escape from the present and/or future is a little more abstract. But is as much a conscious decision as the previous two. Remarks on the state of the world, locally, nationally or internationally are common in everyday life. The barrier effect of the CSA was also quite effective at removing one from the stream of regular time temporarily. But it was still a normal occurrence to talk about the daily happenings with the addition of a comment to the effect of how it was

of great benefit to have the farm around in such tumultuous times. New media is pervasive, it's almost impossible to ignore. Getting outside and growing food could well be a coping mechanism, a way to get a moment's reprieve from the constant barrage. It would be remiss of me not to bring up the pandemic here. Of course, while the pandemic can be lumped in with escape from the present it was such an overbearing force that it deserves its own separate mention. In the early days of the first pandemic lockdown, in which the travel limit was severely restrictive at a 2 kilometre radius from home, no volunteer or member was permitted to visit Feirm Bheag. It was left to Mia and Kerry to tend to the needs of the land and plants. As the initial lockdown rules eased allowing for a 5 kilometre and then 10 kilometre travel distance I along with those who previously could not visit began to tentatively return. We did not know it at this point in mid-May 2020 that the coming months would see the reintroduction of a number of restrictions including travel. Food had always been included but during the height of the first lockdown even the excuse of collecting food from the CSA didn't seem like a good enough reason to invite people back to the farm for the steering group. But each subsequent lockdown eased rules around essential reasons for travel meaning the CSA could return to somewhat normal operations once hygiene practices were put in place such as regular hand washing, social distancing and the wearing of masks.

Challenges

We live in a world of economic growth ever accelerating ad infinitum[11] with linear momentum. There is a sense of things getting faster and faster be it due to technological innovation or the feeling of barrelling into a doomed global climate. Or so we like to believe. The pandemic may have slowed the turning of the globe but it is reasonable to assume that this is but temporary. In this world of growth nothing is left unaffected. But this planet spanning tidal wave is not uniform for some the necessity to grow bigger and get faster is not as pressing. Feirm Bheag is one such place. Nonetheless, the pressure to get the farm up to maximum capacity is there. Max capacity being something that was achieved not long after the national lockdown was lifted. Reaching the current maximum capacity of members is something to be lauded in many regards; the countless hours of hard labour and the continued word of mouth by those connected with the farm. But this milestone is not without conflict. The community of members, volunteers and the farmer(s) is a fragmented one. And where there is fragmentation conflict of some sort is usually not far behind. It should be noted that the conflict I speak is minor, relatively speaking, but that does not mean it will be ignored. While there are a few examples I will start with the most interesting one.

[11] We will come back to what "growth" might mean in chapter 4.

After a few months of volunteering I was informed that within the upper echelons of the CSA there had been disquiet between leading members over the direction the farm should be taking. At this stage in my fieldwork I was still relatively new so whether down to mistrust or unawareness of my interest I was not made aware of exact details. But from what I could gather there was unease over the perception that the farm was moving away from some of its core tenets. Personally I found this perception unfounded but this was not for me to say and truthfully I would not have been able to say anything as to this day I do not know exactly who had voiced their concern. Over the months of my fieldwork the steering committee rotated out many members, some of whom are no longer connected with the CSA as they once were. I can only assume the troubled parties lay among them. From what I could understand the debate rested on a difference of opinion in regards to any monetisation of any farm produce outside of the membership fee. By monetisation I am referring to the selling of any products separate from being included in one's weekly share. This would later be introduced in the 2019 and 2020 seasons to great success with eggs, chutney and kombucha all making appearances. As I've mentioned before it was no mystery that Feirm Bheag had its peaks and troughs so any idea that could potentially bring more stability to its existence was given a platform. But at this time moves away from the strict adherence to the membership model was not entertained by some parties. Any move that was perceived as commercially motivated appeared to receive the ire of some influential members. This came to the fore with the proposed move away from the three tier membership model that was in place when I first began my fieldwork. When signing up to become a member of the CSA one had the choice of a "small", "medium" or "large" share, each containing more produce than the last and an increasing price tag to match. This model certainly had its advantages, primarily it allowed potential members to tailor their share size to the amount of vegetables and fruit they would like to receive. The small and medium shares were the most popular by a significant margin with only one or two large shares being made up each week. The smaller shares were the most popular and we would spend a large amount of time dividing the weekly produce into three different sized shares and ensuring each size received a fair amount of produce. With plans to increase the membership capacity of the farm up to 50 during 2018 Mia put forward the proposal that for the 2019 season onward the share size should be standardised to one share size for all members. It was a clever idea that would reduce the complexities arising from multiple share sizes and would leave more time each week to carry out other important duties around the farm. There were trade-offs, namely that the cost of membership would rise for the members who opted for the small share size and that those on the large share would begin to receive less produce that they would have previously. But these concerns did not stop the membership of the CSA voting in favour of the measure. However, before the idea came before the members for a vote Mia informed me that there was resistance to the idea from a handful of members, one or two of whom sat on the steering committee. From what I could gather the argument lay in the perceived foundational ideals of Feirm Bheag that prohibited any move toward what these members saw as, in effect, commercialisation. The standardisation of the share size and the slowly ramping up of on the side sales of eggs and chutney

were apparently mirroring too much of a commercial business for the tastes of some. In the effort to improve efficiency and boost membership numbers, those of us in favour of the new standardised system were engaging in practices uncomfortably close to capitalist enterprise and a move away from the local community focused anti-capitalist origins of the CSA. It became an argument against the increasing growth of the farm. In some regards it was a legitimate argument, the CSA had been set up with the goal of fostering a community and producing food for a small group of local members. Ambitions to increase the growth of the membership and in turn increased food production and overall efficiency in some ways may have contravened this. An interesting aside; the barriers for community farm "buy-in", and thus growth in size, highlighted by Poulsen, Spiker and Winch (2014) did not seem to materialise as a particular challenge to Feirm Bheag, "buy-in" from the surrounding community was never an issue with demand for a share slot regularly exceeding demand. As I would come to learn, without the striving to become something bigger it is unlikely the farm would ever survive.

The threat of closure or at the very best relocation was a near constant at Feirm Bheag. The County Council were somewhat notorious in the region for disregarding the needs of the locals in favour of multinational corporations and the whims of the Irish Development Authority's (IDA) Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) program. As was mentioned in chapter one, the land on which the CSA stood was not owned by the farm or its members but instead was industrially zoned land leased off the County Council on an 11 month recurring contract. In 2019 this would change to a license arrangement which to this day nobody seems particularly sure what this means not even the Council. And so, from its inception, Feirm Bheag has been in a precarious position requiring it to prove itself to indifferent benefactors. An important part of this, at least it was seen to be by Mia, Claire, was the continued growth of the farm. When she took over as head farmer Mia pushed for a more intense focus on the modest growth that had taken place up to that point. Being a bigger operation with more members was seen as the primary metric through which Feirm Bheag could claim legitimacy in the eyes of the local geographic community and the County Council. With the private purchase of the land beside the farm in late 2019 and the subsequent construction of industrial warehouses, the pressure put on legitimising the farm to outside observers only increased. To Mia growth was seen as one of the main solutions to the existential problems facing the farm. That is not to say she naively believed that having a more efficient farm with more members would stop the County Council from reclaiming the land, she knew very well that investing in the farm might be in vain. But if there was to be any chance of survival growing the farm in every manner possible was one of the best ways to ensure it. In the event that the County Council did reclaim the land to sell there was a contingency to ensure that the farm would survive. Admittedly, the contingency plan was not the most solidly put together or the most detailed but it did provide an outline as to what would happen. What the plan did require is another plot of land for the farm to relocate to, something that it was hoped the County Council would provide when the

time came. There was no guarantee the Council would and so Mia was convinced we would have to show them that the farm was worth saving if and when the time came for the CSA to move. A number of activities took place to raise the profile of the farm from mid-2019 to early 2020, when the threat of closure felt its closest due to the changing over from the 11 month recurring lease to the new far less secure license system and the purchase of the land directly beside the farm. An appearance at the local 2019 St. Patrick's Day Parade had brought in a healthy amount of interest with enough new members clamouring to join that a waiting list had to be set up. Social media presence was upped. Before this initiative the CSA had had a website and some unused social media profiles but under new volunteer management the Instagram profile was breathed new life and garnered a modest following relatively quickly. A large canvas sign was bought branded with the Feirm Bheag's logo and placed on fencing at the entrance to the farm. This entrance being on a well-travelled back road paralleling the motor way led to many curious passers-by coming into the farm to investigate. These measures together would not only increase the size of the pool of potential new members but also raise the profile of the CSA throughout the local area and beyond. This would, it was hoped, prove the CSA's worth in the eyes of the County Council. The result of all of these efforts was not clear as the Council as a collective was not particularly responsive to any of the attempts. That is not say there was no response, in fact on one occasion a councillor, an elected official of the council was convinced that a visit to the farm was worthwhile. This visit was, in no uncertain terms, anticlimactic. Then there is the other constant, but always under the surface and almost always spoken about in a passive mode. These are the conflicts arising from belief. If I can rewind a little, during my Masters research I came into contact with a very overt form of conflict, one of meaning or belief. I had research participants on both sides of the peatland conservation debate, and while these two sides would argue against each other over the merits of their conservation efforts they could rarely agree on anything. I concluded that the issues they argued over may have had the same names, i.e. conservation, but these words meant very different things to each party. This may seem like the obvious conclusion to draw for a seasoned anthropologist but for me at the time it was truly eye-opening resulting in a new awareness of meaning and conflict, particularly in terms of language and symbolism. A similar issue could be seen in the playing out in relation to Feirm Bheag albeit not operating on the exact same premise as what I experienced during my time research peatland conservation. In regards to the CSA this discussion revolved around the concept of "development". And this was not so much a conversation between two parties but rather on one side a powerful institution pursuing its agenda for regional "development" and on the other an independent small holding CSA trying to convince the powers-that-be of the worthiness of its existence. I did not spend enough time with County Council officials to remark of their specific beliefs on the matter so I will refer you to the Kildare County Council Development Plan for 2017-2023 that we will discuss in the next chapter. But it is safe to say that the institutional conceptions of "development" for the area that Feirm Bheag called home were incompatible with those held by those involved with the farm. For Mia and Kerry, the word "development" was never used but the need to increased funding and

awareness of community supported agriculture was something they were passionate about. They were aware of the institutional apathy toward projects such as the CSA and the threat that posed to the existence of Feirm Bheag but also the CSA movement in the region altogether. If we look to the wider Irish and global context this was no surprise 'because the work 'temporary' is defined by its opposition to 'permanence', such projects are defined by most planning and city authorities according to their short-term 'opportunities' only; that is, they are understood as a holding 'solution' until a 'real' development project is secured' (Till & McArdle (2015, 39). In other words, local authorities are more than happy to provide land to projects such as community farms as for the most part these are seen as temporary endeavours which will eventually be replace by more acceptable developments be they apartments, offices or carparks.

There were other threats too primarily of a more natural non-human variety compared to that of the county council. I will discuss non-humans in greater detail in the chapters below but in terms of threats to the farm certain non-humans did present various. These non-human threats came in the shape of the typically highly unpredictable Irish weather and the various "pests" that frequented the farm for a snack. Time itself and the biological processes that marched ever forward were a threat in the sense that the plants we grew required certain amounts of time in the ground to grow and particularly times in the year to sown. This presented a challenge that anyone who has attempted to grow something can identify with. With everything done with human labour, time was of the essence when seedlings needed planting and, while to a lesser extent, when grown plants needed harvesting.

Suburbia

One may have noticed that that much of what we have discussed thus far is heavily revolved around concepts of the "rural" and of the "urban". I have inserted the "suburban" term in a number of places but it is the concepts of "rural" and "urban" that get the most airtime. The focus on these two polarised concepts creates a false dichotomy in which there is little in between. While both the rural and urban are important analytical categories there are a multitude of bordering and middling categories between these two, this created a spectrum. It is somewhere along this spectrum that we find suburbia. The suburbs while very much a product of the polar urban, are markedly different, in geographic, social and ecological respects. Not to mention that it is possible to have the suburban situated in more rural conditions. A suburb in this case would refer to the footprint of a built-up residential area but these can and have appeared anywhere. While generally located on city outskirts or within a short distance of the city centre, a suburb is not limited to these locations. A small rural town can serve as a substitute for a main urban centre. And so, when I say suburban this is an umbrella term that has its own spectrum within that of the urban-rural band. We can certainly use the analytical tools sharpened for the rural

and the urban but with the caveat that what we are dealing with is neither of these. As I mentioned in the introduction I was raised as a suburbanite. I have spent the majority of my life living in one and I would regularly visit others to visit friends or family each one different in their own subtle ways. There is a prevailing thought that suburbs are merely clones of one another produced by a conveyer belt of architects, property developers and real-estate companies. And to some extent this is true, I for one never thought much of the housing estate I grew up in. But this view tends to disregard the underlying uniqueness of each of these places under the layers of concrete and tarmacadam, a suburb is home to a geography, an ecology and the social. Suburbs may very well lack character but they are not character-less. I do not mean to romanticise here, what came before the concrete and tarmacadam is not some idealised past but instead these things of the past are still present albeit a more muted presence in most cases. As an area becomes increasingly built up the presence of these things may almost be completely drowned out. Suburbs are a place of accelerated transformation; things happen and change at a fast pace in the myriad of housing estates. These transformations accelerate all facets of life in the suburbs, including changes to the ecology and the fluctuations in community formation and maintenance. Let us focus on community formation and maintenance for a moment as I think it will illuminate some of the factors behind the forms of community that have sprung up at Feirm Bheag. Generally within a suburb the community exists in two disparate states. The first is the incredibly loose affiliations the population of a suburb share with one another being from the same housing estate for example. While there is a geographic community here of sorts, due to the ever-high levels of change, the moving in and out of new families and individuals the construction of new estates and the shifting boundaries of the suburb itself, it is common for there to be no suburb wide collective identity. What does form and quite strongly are smaller common interest based cultural communities. These sometimes function as the only form of community present in a suburb, especially in a young or newly created one but is commonplace in more established suburbs as well. We can fit the community and the sub-groupings of Feirm Bheag in here.

I am circling an argument here that the suburbs are in some way closer to "nature" but that they have the capacity to accelerate further away from it faster than the traditionally demarcated "urban". But I do not feel as though this is the whole story, the only thing I can be certain of at this point in time is that the relationship between the human and that which is beyond the human is complex. And due to the constantly shifting and warping of time and space in these places, there is a specific yearning for but also movement away from "nature". This movement from "nature" can be characterised as the generally rapid, increased urbanisation of a suburb and removal of green spaces in favour of new housing developments or amenities. It can also be characterised in a more abstract sense through the planning of the housing and apartment estates themselves, which have seen a reduction in both private and public green spaces. These are things that do not involve the active participation of current

residents, one does not need to look far in the news to see that it is common for established residents of an area to butt heads with property developers keen to build.

Glocalisation

As with most things in the world today, the effects of globalisation are difficult to avoid. In many ways much of the CSA movement owes it expansion across the world to the ever increasing intensity of communication and movement of people. As we saw in chapter one, alternative agricultural movements have sprung up independently in places such as Austria, Japan and Switzerland. But in places like the United States, which imported ideas of teikei and anthroposophy throughout the 20th century, and Ireland where the CSA movement made landfall relatively recently, the global movement of information has certainly had an impact. But regardless of the positive impacts increased global interconnectedness has had for community supported agriculture and alternative agriculture in general, it is no mystery that the process of globalisation is one fraught with issues. Hailed as a positive in some regards, the multitude of processes that are globalisation have been met with resistance in a multitude of ways. And so, where globalisation rises, glocalisation rises to meet it. A little dramatic, and a Star Wars reference to boot, but apt. Glocalisation, while generally a term used in relations to describing shifting business practices reacting to consumer preferences, has seen much use in social science research. Generally used to describe how a (global) business or corporation might market products to consumers through marketing highlighting the characteristics that are considered 'local' or by adopting variations for a particular geographic area, glocalisation can be seen as the process through which a global company attempts to soften the (or completely erase) the lines between local and global.

I want to simplify the definition of glocalisation, taking it out of its marketing department origin. Instead I will situate the concept in a more anthropological sense. In this sense I like to think glocalisation comes to mean the ways in which something global manifests as local and is then related back to the global. By this I mean that something global can be formulated at a local level, be that at the community, regional or national level and it is then is generally set up in opposition to "the global". I don't think there is anything new in this formulation of glocalisation, but I would like to put emphasis on the relating of a locally manifested global idea back to the global. This is arguably only a facet of the glocalising process, but for our discussion it is I believe the most important. Let us take Appadurai's (1990) formulation of the "ideoscape". Alongside the other four types of globalisation, ethnoscape, technoscape, mediascape and financescape, ideoscape is a constituent part of how globalisation operates. Appadurai's ideoscape is the process through which the transference of ideas about the CSA system occurred, although it should be noted that dividing up the scapes in this way runs somewhat

contra to how Appadurai formulated his flows of globalisation. Ideoscape simply refers to the movement of ideas, this of course can be connected to each of the other scapes, for ideas need mediums through which to travel. The 5 scapes are all interconnected, as time has progressed since antiquity these scapes have become more powerful and more entangled. And so the ideoscape, or any of the other four scapes, do not flow in a vacuum but for our purposes here it ideoscape that I would like to focus on. As we saw in chapter one, the spread of the community supported agriculture model, and related projects like the teikei movement was a product of, among many things, globalisation. While it does appear that the rough idea of a community supported farming project did sprout up independently at least twice, the CSA and teikei projects, the adopted of these models around the world, particularly of CSA, no doubt owes much of this global adoption to the globalising flow of the ideoscape. This ideoscape is not a one-way street however, while it is the force through which local ideas become global, this flow can go the opposite way too. A glocalising flow, in the context of Feirm Bheag and the CSA movement, can send and receive ideas that are alternative that those primarily carried. Although this is not a true contraflow as it still operates under the same principles of the globalising flow. To put this in other words, ideas travel around the globe being picked up by various individuals and communities who put those ideas, sometimes altered, into practice. In turn the local focused ideas, those of this form of glocalisation, can be repackaged and sent back out into the same globalising forces that brought the idea to them in the first place. This is rather simplistic, but it is deliberately so as it serves the purpose of highlighting the conscious efforts made by Feirm Bheag to resist globalisation at large and instead adopt and spread an alternative that favours the "glocal". Much like that of other alternative agricultural projects there is an active attempt to communicate the message of Feirm Bheag through globalising mediascapes such as social media. The messages that can be sent back up the chain as it were can be anything but one theme crops up across the spectrum when one considers alternative agriculture and it is here we come to resistance.

Resistance

Fig.13: Be a Rebel

Resistance is an important facet of alternative agricultural movements Feirm Bheag included. At Feirm Bheag the forms of resistance that take place are for the most part passive with the exception of the initial conscious choice to become involved with the farm. The reason I use the word passive is not to say that the acts of resistance are inert but instead are passive in the sense of being, for the most part, unconscious. Much of the involvement with the farm from the members are not actively using their participation with the farm as an act of resistance. What resistance is there from the members is more performative in nature. I use performative here in terms of the act not carrying much ideological weight behind them. That is not to say that it is not genuine but the resistance is not focused in any particular way. As we discussed earlier in this chapter there are a number of small groupings within Feirm Bheag's larger community and so one might find focused resistances with them. Although the looseness and transitory nature of these smaller groupings make any sort of focused effort surely quite difficult. Thus a large portion of apparent resistance can only manifest in a performative, some might even say shallow, way. Resistance to what can be difficult nail down because of the unfocused nature of it but it roughly coordinates with the groupings themselves. There is one rather significant exception however; the volunteers. Not all, but many, of the volunteers I spent a considerable amount of time with participated in the farm in part because for them it was a form of resistance. This was not passive or performative resistance instead it was informed and an active part of the lives of those volunteers that practiced it. This has also been observed in Irish community gardens: 'For many this is a process to which they had no previous access, and of which they are not previously cognisant. There is a realisation of disconnection from the ecological food cycle and an opportunity for reconnection. This may be read as a critique of the neoliberal project, which, if not overtly political, is grounded in a new

cognisance of broader socio-ecological processes and their impact in contemporary society' (Corcoran, Kettle & O'Callaghan 2017, 322). For the likes of Niamh, Amy and Tina, volunteering at Feirm Bheag was as much about the community and learning to grow food as it was about actively resisting industrial agriculture, buying food from supermarkets and a general feeling of loss and the out-of-touch-ness they felt for their wider communities. Of course, as already stated many of the volunteers were not paying members of the CSA so they did not receive a weekly share of fruit and vegetables. But most either received a quasi-share each harvest day they attended or grew as much of their own food at home as they could. I use Niamh, Amy and Tina here as they were some of the most vocal about their resistance through their volunteering.

> '*We live in a sick world, because like instead of loving things we turn around and we resist. Yeah, you know, we're like, oh no, like absolutely not we're not gonna do that, like we don't love ourselves. We don't love each other. We're actually disconnected and like the same thing is like with spirituality, if you say you're not a spiritual person. You don't know, but like you can't not, you can't not be a human, not spiritual....we don't even really know like because we're so far removed from it* [nature]'. – *Tina.*

There was a great awareness of the dangers of neoliberalism as can be seen by Tina's quote. Rebellion was still very much a part of the CSA but it was, interestingly enough, carried out at the individual level for reasons specific to the individual. When these individual rebellions are together in the same place it could be perceived as some form of collective, or common, resistance but I contend that this was not collective resistance is a true sense. It is not unusual for people to involve themselves in resistance movements for their own reasons. This is presumably have many anti-establishment commons are devised but at Feirm Bheag there was no collective banner under which to rally. A question that is worth raising as we think about what exact forms of resistance can exist for a community such as that of the CSA, is the question of resistance within the suburbs, or more specifically the suburban middle classes[12]. Earlier in this chapter I defended the suburbs from some of their common criticisms but they are by no means perfect. And within them there is much resistance some of which is directed toward the suburb itself. But the suburban resistances found in the CSA tend not to be characterised by what is usually considered when one uses the term "resistance" in an urban environment. While Feirm Bheag is a grassroots organisation by definition, and certainly promotes ideas of food sovereignty and independence from industrial agriculture, it does these things from a place of privilege. To the members' credit, this privilege, the opportunity and ability to support the CSA in exchange for the local organic produce, is something widely acknowledged. Regardless, however, the resistances formulated

[12] Earlier we talked about the disappearance of the middle classes as traditionally formulated, in this context I am using the term to describe this disappearing, or perhaps transforming, class.

are done so in such a way that it is specific to the middle class-ness of the members and volunteers. As the "green middle classes" (Pratt, 2014), there is potentially a limit on how effective these forms of individual resistances can be. Yet CSA and other forms of alternative agriculture have "the potential to be socially transformative for those involved, offering a socio-spatial context in which priorities, values, and even politics can be reimagined" (Corcoran, Kettle & O'Callaghan 2017, 316-317). While it cannot be ignored that the 'green middle-classes' come from a place rooted in individualistic purchase power choice, resistances situated within it may still be effective as these practices 'in such spaces has the potential to challenge the normalcy of the neoliberal urban development model' (2017,309) regardless of who carries them out.

Chapter III: Scarcity, Precarity & Sovereignty

"Bits and pieces, Stuart, bits and pieces"

- Cody

I recently downloaded a new app, COIN, which allows me to "geomine" tiny amounts of in-app currency which I can after a certain almost unattainable amount exchange for cryptocurrency with a choice of Bitcoin, Ethereum, or XYO. In the app using a GPS style map overlay each "tile", a certain few metres squared, is assigned a random value that one can 'mine' by tapping the screen to receive the value of that tile. Each of these 'tiles' are arbitrarily assigned values by an algorithm that does not particularly care what is there in physical space. Geomining, much like any cryptocurrency "mining" is a way of exchanging information for digital currency. In the realm of traditional crypto mining this information is the solutions of complex equations that require many computers working for hours or days to solve them. Geomining on the other hand, much like the name suggests, relies on geographic information as the exchangeable commodity. When I tap my screen the app is sending my location to what the creators of the system call, ominously enough, the 'Network', and this act of tapping my screen confirms that I am indeed at the location my phone is reporting to the app. When this information is received by the "Network" I am rewarded some in-app currency in exchange. My location data is valuable. But, as it is well known in our discipline, locations are far more than just strings of code with arbitrarily assigned digital values. The landscape encompasses a myriad of values not to mention it is embroiled in a complex web of feelings and meanings that concern the landscape in physical reality and in abstract thought. In this chapter we will be concerning ourselves with questions of value and in turn how differing values attributed to the land impact the CSA. Through this we will cast our net out in a more general sense, to see how the situations the CSA finds itself in are reflected more widely. As the title of this chapter suggests the use of both "scarcity" and "precarity" are central to the discussion of value and so to begin we first need to briefly pick apart these two terms.

Precarious Scarcity

After my initial visits to Feirm Bheag it would be another few months till I visited the CSA site again. January 2019 to be exact, now under the management of a new head farmer, Ken having taken a step back from this role to pursue more experimental types of farming, "nutrient dense agriculture" being his current interest. Mia was now helming the site alongside Cody who had been working on the farm

since the previous summer and was due to leave in July. Between the two of them, and the odd volunteer of which I was one, the farm kept ticking over. My first official week as a volunteer came in the middle of February. Unlike a typical mid-February week it was somewhat warm and the sun was out, something that took me, Mia, and Cody by surprise. It was a week to get work done, fair weather at this time of year was never guaranteed. After spending hours checking plants and building some parts of a new seed sowing station and sowing seeds I went home, the day's working hours at the farm during winter and early spring only went till just after midday usually. That weekend it snowed. Monday rolled around and even though it had stopped falling from the sky snow littered the ground. What I arrived at that morning was a stark contrast to the farm I had been at the previous week. Where once there had been shades of green and purple, there was white and brown. A small polytunnel, known as the cat tunnel, had collapsed from the weight of the snow falling on top of it during the night. Cody had built it in the summer. With pride he had shown it on my first day the previous week. Today he wasn't the upbeat person I had met just the week before. The tunnel had been built with minimal funds and had relied heavily on Mia's and Cody' ingenuity and determination for its continued existence. The snow had destroyed the tunnel beyond repair, and it had taking many of the plants sheltering underneath it with it. Of the plants that had survived the initial collapse many had succumbed to the ice with many a green leaf now covered in white frost. The loss of the plants was felt but the loss of the tunnel hit both Mia and Cody quite hard as they both knew it would not be easy to replace, there was a significant lack of both time and money. The farm would overcome the loss but it highlighted from early on in my fieldwork an important struggle that was faced by Feirm Bheag on a regular basis. We were almost always running with the bare minimum of supplies. We found ourselves using whatever we could find during my stint at the Feirm Bheag CSA. Jury-rigging was a fact of life on the farm whether that was building furniture, creating tools, or managing the land itself. Waste materials from the local surrounding area such as cardboard and rubber tyres were collected and used in a myriad of ways. Of particular note was the use of tyres and plastic sheets. Two things in of themselves that are not what one might call environmentally conscious materials but both were recycled (and upcycled) endlessly. While material scarcity, not to mention financial scarcity, was not always urgent it skulked in the background as an ever-present concern.

Scarcity is in some ways naturally occurring but in many ways scarcity is manufactured. Taking what Ioris (2011) calls an "non-essentialist" understanding of scarcity we must 'reject scarcity as a purely physical and economic phenomenon, but emphasises the contingency of sociospatial relations that affect the allocation and use of resources' (2011, 613-614). The various scarcities faced by the CSA are ones that were mainly imposed upon it but one cannot ignore those that were also somewhat willingly and proactively pursued. Freely accepting of, and to some extent proactive, scarcity is something I need to explain as not only is it important to understand here. These forms of scarcity rely

on the ideals of the zero-waste movement and the broader low carbon-footprint goals of the CSA. While I would not categorise this willing scarcity as fundamentalist per se, Shantz (2003) offers an interesting critique of this form of environmentalism in which he states 'the environmental voluntarism espoused by fundamentalist ecologists is directed at the market rather than political engagement with social relations underpinning market economies' (2003, 151). To be, in the broadest sense, "eco-friendly" and contribute as close to zero-waste as possible one must forego some material comforts. There are many eco-friendly alternatives to many of the less environmentally friendly products but they generally demand higher prices putting them out of reach for the CSA on many occasions. In some cases the scarcity of an environmentally friendly alternative meant a less environmentally friendly option had to be used. A perfect example of this particular problem is the packaging used to house each of the shares for the members. We were always thinking of new ways to reduce the amount of packaging used each week when dividing up the produce. When I first began volunteering we would pack the more delicate foods, such as tomatoes, in small plastic containers. They were not recyclable. While one could reuse these containers a number of times, ultimately, they were not a sustainable solution in the long-term both economically and environmentally. The containers were eventually retired and it was decided to put all the produce of a share in the same brown paper bag, this was to be done more carefully so as to not squash the tomatoes. The brown paper bags were a one and done affair and would usually last the journey from the farm to the home but not much more if anything in the bag was in any way wet. On more than one occasion I would be carrying one of these bags on the bus home to suddenly notice the bag rapidly becoming lighter and wonder why a bunch of onions was taking the bus. In other words, the brown paper bags were not fond of their own structural integrity. In August 2020 the CSA would introduce a smaller paper bag to fit inside the usual bigger bag for delicate or easily dispersed produce. While not as unsustainable as the plastic containers, the small paper bags added more waste. These paper bags proved useful only to a point however. Some food items, namely the tomatoes and courgettes, required a container made of tougher material and so the little plastic boxes were reintroduced in a lesser capacity.

Physical materials are but one facet of the larger imposition caused by a broader, less tangible, sense of scarcity. This was informed by wider large scale events occurring, not just in the locality or in Ireland but across the globe. I am referring to the causes and effects of global climate change. In almost all climate change narratives, bar those that contend the whole thing is a hoax, the urgency of the already happening disaster is the primary tool used to convince us all that something is terribly wrong with the world. Time for action and for hope of belaying the most detrimental effects of a rapidly changing climate is always running out. This feeling of time scarcity was the most common abstract, although in many ways not abstract at all, scarcity. It would be remiss of me not to mention the effect that scarcity, or maybe more accurately the fear of scarcity, had on the CSA alongside other alternative

community driven local farming projects. At the outset of the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns there were growing fears as to the health of national and global chains of production for every type of commodity and while toilet paper springs to mind, the shrapnel from the pandemic struck out into every corner of the economy. Mainstream conventional agriculture was not spared. But of the initial fallout community and locally supported farms not only survived but thrived to an extent I had not witnessed up to that point. In Ireland, albeit received with much consternation from the general public, the Green Party pushed for people to grow their own food, pushing the idea of each household growing lettuce on their windowsills. From traditional media outlets like The Irish Times and RTÉ to social media profiles of community farms blowing up in viewership numbers alternative agriculture was having something of a revelation. The membership numbers at the CSA hit maximum capacity with a waiting list in tow. In the early months of the pandemic when images on television depicted the strife of farmers caught up in the industrial food chain were broadcast for all to see Feirm Bheag was able to continue with minimal food waste while providing plenty of produce to its members.

For my money the precarious nature of the CSA cannot be understated. Much like the sense of scarcity the precarity of the community farm was not something felt at every moment but would crop up every now and again. But in those moments of clairvoyance the liminality of the CSA was brought into much finer a focus. As Corcoran, Kettle & O'Callaghan observe in the Irish context; 'While all sorts of 'alternative' uses are allowed to flourish in periods of economic and urban stagnation, the wealth of evidence suggests that landowners will seek to displace these 'temporary' uses once opportunities for more profitable sale or redevelopment present themselves (Bresnihan and Byers, 2015; Colomb, 2012; Safransky, 2014)' (2017,316). A common topic of discussion between myself and a number of my interlopers was the short recurring lease on the land held by the CSA. An 11-month arrangement with the county council, the lease was far from ideal especially considering it was a lease of 5 years is what I was told would be required to utilise the farm to its full potential. The lease agreement had been set up around the same time as the inception on the CSA in 2012, and up until 2019 the agreement was renewed each year without issue. The lease was not ideal however. The main problem with the lease was the requirement for annual renewal. This was a problem because many of the potential sources of funding at local, national and European level the CSA could apply for had the prerequisite of a multi-year lease. This prerequisite limited the funding that Mia could apply for, and generally the limited funding that could be applied for were smaller amounts and were designated for specific purpose projects. In other words, the funding could not be used to pay for labour/wages but instead had to be spent on the building of a new polytunnel or the buying of equipment. The lease was a constant source of apprehension on the part of the Mia and the members of the steering group. I believe it is no exaggeration when I state that, whether directly or indirectly, the precarity generating effect of the 11-month lease is the root of many of the arising problems faced by the CSA. As already mentioned this

resulted in difficulties when applying for monetary supports. Furthermore, the lack of a longer more stable lease reduced the capability of the farm to develop and pursue its goals of self-sufficiency (Chandra & Diehl, 2019). The threat of the non-renewal of the lease was another cause for concern during my fieldwork. Sometime in 2019 the CSA had applied for an extension on the lease hoping that the restrictive 11-month duration could be extended to something more workable. What followed was months of confusion on the sides of the CSA and the local authorities. There were questions over who actually owned the land, whether it was the local county council or the national Department of Education. Tt one point it was mentioned that the county council had somehow lost the lease agreement with the CSA that had been drawn up years earlier. In the middle of July 2020, after what appeared to be much lobbying on the part of the CSA, a county council official visited the farm. I was not present for this particular visit but the retelling of the encounter by Mia and Abigale was not what one could call encouraging. From this point onwards there was no lease agreement to be had. Instead, some vaguely described license to use the land would be issued, the terms of which were not particularly clear. The licence, although what it actually constituted was rather vague and difficult to understand, replaced the annual lease at the behest of the county council. The land the CSA is situated on is, in no uncertain terms, monetarily valuable. With the ever-expanding suburbs of Dublin City reaching further out into neighbouring counties the price of land has increased dramatically in the last few decades. The CSA sits on land that is zoned for commercial or industrial use and so while not as valuable as land that is zoned for residential construction. It is of greater value in terms of tax and potential FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) funding to the county council or other national actors as a commercial investment than as a community supported farm. In some conversations it felt as though it was only a matter of time till the land would fall to into the hands of some property developer and be reduced to nothing more than a site for industrial warehouses. This fear came into extremely fine focus in the early months of 2020 in which the large field adjacent to the CSA was bought for development. Eventually Mia, after speaking with the foreman of the site, discovered that a supply and repair warehouse for a German airline was to be built. By the middle of March, after the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown was declared, the site was closed indefinitely. On one of my last fieldwork visits the site was still closed and had been effectively abandoned. I also noticed that much of the fencing from the site was now acting as climbing walls for the CSA. It turned out Mia had been given permission to take whatever she could carry from the site to use on the farm. While it felt like the CSA had dodged a warehouse shaped bullet, the worst was still to come. The construction industry's cogs did eventually begin to turn again but this time the threat was not as indirect as the airline's warehouse. This time the encroachment came from an unused part of the field the CSA itself sat on of. The excavators, graders and compactors were right behind us, building a hill of dirt as they tore up the ground. The party responsible for the construction was the school adjacent on the right side that was expanding. A new carpark and tarmac football pitch were to be constructed to facilitate future plans to increase the capacity of the school. When looking for answers, Mia told me that the local authorities in the county council had cleaned their hands of any

responsibility of sanctioning the construction nor did the school itself seem willing to admit they knew who had authorised the incursion. This seeming lack of authority over the project did little to hamper its progress however and within days of breaking ground a dividing fence had been placed metres from the back of the farm. It could be considered a miracle that the CSA still stands at the time I am writing this. But this reality was never something that most members were aware of with Mia and Kerry doing their best to keep up a visage of smooth sailing. The precarious nature of the project was something that was something best kept under wraps.

> *'Actually, most of the members haven't got a notion, you know, they don't see any of that and like, we've had various crises…financial crises, crises with personnel, you know we've had times when we thought this is going to be the end. There's mad efforts going on behind the scenes, you know. On the surface, everything is serene and the vegetables are getting produced every week.'*
>
> *– Aryn*

But the precarity of the farm was not limited to the physical space it inhabited but also affected the community of members and volunteers itself. And there comes a point when one must be honest with themselves and this moment too came for the farm. In the late summer of 2019 a few months before the plot of land that would become the warehouse beside the CSA was sold, a meeting was held. This meeting, organised by Mia, Kerry and the steering group was planned with the sole intention of bolstering support for Feirm Bheag from within the membership. For the last while we had been experiencing declining numbers in member turnout. This was not only turnout in terms of members donating some of their time to offer a hand but also in terms of members coming to collect their share of weekly produce. There were weeks during 2019 where we were lucky to have over half of the CSA's members collect their share. It was becoming a problem. As a result, the meeting took place and all the cards were put on the table. The meeting alongside the moving of the "harvest" day to one day a week at a specific time worked. Turnout to collect shares shot up to 100% for a number of weeks and remained high up until the pandemic was declared. As I stated in the introduction I began to see and speak with people who had been members of the farm for some time but I had never met nor had Mia or Kerry. Although precarious Feirm Bheag's community had come together. Any onlooking passers-by would see nothing but a vibrant community farm bringing locally grown food to the residents of the suburb. And this would prove an important image to portray to those onlooking passers-by.

Value

'So, it was just like oil and water, you know'.

– Mia

And so we come back to something mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the concept of value. What was valuable or maybe more importantly for our discussion what forms of value were produced and of those which were a priority, differed greatly between the actors with vested interests in the CSA or the land the CSA called home. It is not surprising that there was a vast matrix of diverging and converging values when diverse individuals and groups are brought together it is somewhat unavoidable. The set of values carried by the variety of groupings defined in chapter 2 were quite similar in general but there were differences which can be drawn along the sub-grouping lines. These differences create their own form of precarity, a kind that interferes with the collective action and vision that alternative projects require to remain cohesive.

'*There's a lot of conformity and I think culturally that's because of our history. You know, under different oppressions and different rules, we've never seen nothing, we've never believed. We haven't much experience as a culture being like, this is us. So I think there's a lot of resistance to new things. Yes. And everyone* [at Feirm Bheag] *feels that in the energy of Ireland. When I lived in Canada I just felt the energy there to try new things was a lot stronger.*'

– Niamh

The precarious nature of the CSA in regard to the land it called home was a direct result of a differing set of values. It will appear obvious from the passages above that the values and beliefs held by the members and volunteers of Feirm Bheag were almost totally incompatible with those of the local authority or national government. Through existing, the CSA flew in the face of the land development doctrine espoused by public governing bodies. For example, if one were to look at Kildare County Council's 2017-2023 Development Plan, one would find under the "Growth Strategy" that the "Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy" (RSES) primarily 'supports the continued growth of Dublin as the national economic engine' (2020, 15). In the same plan report, under section 2.7 "Preferred Development Strategy", it is claimed that it is based on the RSES and aims "on building strong urban centres while protecting the rural hinterlands' (2020, 21). But there is no mention of protection of pre-existing community projects in the plan, instead the town and suburb in which the CSA is situated in is

the target of 'investment in services, employment growth and infrastructure' (2020, 26). It would be difficult to claim that these will have overly negative effects on the town and suburb but there is a noticeable lack of engagement with improving or supporting community projects present. If we consider the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine's report "A to Z of Climate Action", published in 2019, there is scant detail on references to community-led projects, with only one page dedicated to "Locally Led Schemes" but the body of text below the title does not refer to community projects, let along any form of alternative agriculture. That is not to say there was absolutely no interest in Feirm Bheag from the County Council, in fact, a local councillor for the Green Party, Sophia, was quite involved with the CSA and was well known to many of the members. One could regularly find her at the farm speaking with members and volunteers about numerous local and national issues, from roads to climate change mitigation. I only managed to sit down and have a proper conversation with her once, but it was easy to tell that she was a believer in the CSA model disagreeing with my somewhat cynical thoughts on the matter of their viability. Sophia was also positive when speaking of the efforts made by the County Council in the space of environmental issues. With a greener minded council Sophia explained how much has been done in this realm in recent years but acknowledged that *'there's more awareness of the need for community groups like Feirm Bheag but it's still, you know, nowhere near [where it needs to be], there should be more political considerations for structural, what it means in terms of governance, what it means in terms of crisis response…so it's not where it should be. It is increasingly with the council pushing in general the sustainability agenda'*. But as we saw in the previous lines above the sustainability agenda of the council is somewhat out of step with the reality faced by Feirm Bheag. But not all encounters with the County Council were as pleasant as those with Sophia. There is one interaction in my time at the farm that stuck out for Mia and Kerry. I was not present but Mia's story of the day's events more than made up for my absence. The interaction in question was with another councillor representing a different party on the County Council from that of Sophia's.

'*Yeah, so long story short, so, through one of the volunteers. Through her really and, like it was through that kind of connection, and the TD (Teacha Dála) had said that was going through like a community project and there has to be a portion of land designated for, you know, the community. We said look we'll meet you at the farm, you know we all put our heads together, you know myself Kerry and other members of the steering committee, and Niamh and Amy, were on-site and so we all, you weren't there were you.*

[No, I wasn't there]

Right so yeah so it was, it was a bunch of us and I remember prior to that, you know, lots of housekeeping was done and things were tidied and you know all that so getting ready for like an

almost like an inspection of sorts. So, the place was grand and nothing lying around and everything looks nice or whatever, so the TD arrives and he had the shiniest cleanest shoes on ever and everything at the farm was muddy and, falling apart, as nice as it could be. To my anal standards, we're still like you know bits missing, farm items hanging around the place you know. So em, even though he's from Kildare, you know, he's all shaken hands with men who own horses and, you know, all of that kind of thing. Yeah, he really stuck out like a sore thumb, so we came showed him the sowing tunnels, he had this mask and said, you know, Feirm Bheag farm is at the top of the list for this project, where community, community land has to be assigned to a community group. They said we're top the list was all very nice, and exciting, and he pointed to where you know designated area would be, and we all got very excited. You know, it turns out that we shouldn't have been so enticed by that because any, any funding or awarding of anything you'd know yourself like even academia like you can't just be given something you have to apply for. Other people, you have to be known, public knowledge, you know there's probably like, you know, phases all this where you know make it to the next round, or you know, different levels of awards being granted so all of that. But no, since that meeting, we haven't had any more interactions with him. Yeah. Sort of a strange occurrence really like I had said afterwards, like back in the days when you know they'll go into pub or, like, you're in a nightclub or something, and be like, let me buy you a drink and you're like, Oh yeah, sure, and then you never see them again. They're like I'll call you but left waiting by the phone crying. Like that bloke bought me a rum and coke and he hasn't come back yet.'

– Mia

As is to be expected there is a discrepancy between the values of Feirm Bheag and those of the local and national government. It is not a conflict, instead this difference manifests as apathy from both sides toward one another. There is some acknowledgement of each other as seen above but for the most part neither farm nor County Council are particularly concerned with what the other is doing, unless it concerns the land itself. As Mia put it later in the same conversation:

'*I think this even goes for, you know, community farm or, you know, like, community hall or something like with a group. Like, I just don't think they're, they're immersed enough in it it's not part of them so they're just there. It's like they're our spokespersons but, I don't know, they're just not able to translate in the same way as you know someone who's a farmer or someone who is that, you know, community group leader.*'

– Mia

This fits well into the proclamation by Feirm Bheag that it is an apolitical entity albeit by virtue of existing I would argue that it is in fact a political project. But more importantly this apathy has detrimental effects on the CSA and many other community-led projects as Mia rightfully pointed out. However, the apathy, or at very least an extreme lack of attention was specific to what the Feirm Bheag community were trying to accomplish. What I mean by this is that the farm was valuable to the Council representatives but not for the same reasons as those held by Mia, Kerry, Niamh, Tina, Amy and rest of the volunteers and members. As I have already mentioned there is little mention of community projects in the County Council plans, and I could not find any specific reference to community agricultural initiatives. But what there is plenty mentions of is "growth" and "development" and from the stories I was told and through my own experiences, it is words like these two that were never far from the lips of politicians and representatives that showed up at the farm. As Mia described one of these visitors, when he came to the farm '*he was just seeing the dollar signs.*' The majority of participants I spoke with on the issue of the Council's involved, or lack thereof, voiced similar criticisms. Ranging from the Council not wanted to help out, or the Council making things more difficult that they needed to be, to it being suspected the Council held malicious intent toward the farm. I believe these perceptions can all stem from one factor: the value of the land versus the value of what was on it. These sets of values cannot be truly compared as they consist of completely different motivations but laying them out might offer some more insight into the constrained relationship between Feirm Bheag and the local authorities. I cannot speak for each member of the Council nor those who are responsible for drawing up the county developmental plans but we can assess them generally in relation to the stance held by the Council as a singular entity. While this no doubt removes much of the nuance one would find within such an organisation remaining at the level of the institution will suffice. This will also give us a better feeling for the point of view held by those at the CSA.

Sprawl and Encroachment

Fig.14: Attack of the Warehouse

The disorganised sprawl of the city as it spreads further and further out from its centre is not a newly discovered phenomenon. Urban sprawl is a characteristic of many, if not all, cities to some extent. In some ways one could call it an organic process, part of the city's nature to expand. By this I do not mean the city itself is an inevitable natural process but for a city to exist and be maintained it must grow. For the suburban town the CSA is situated on the outskirts of the first wave of urbanisation had long since passed. In fact the suburbs of Dublin City have spread much farther out beyond the town. The town had been bypassed years earlier by the motorway and there is nothing conventionally rural about the place. And so, the feeling of urban sprawl and of the aforementioned encroachment is on a micro level. This micro level creates a more intense feeling of claustrophobia towards the concrete jungle. Urban sprawl occurs in waves, it is not one single event that instantaneously urbanises an area. After the initial wave however, urbanisation becomes more minute. Eventually different urbanising projects, must compete for space in already highly urbanised towns and cities. It is the secondary and tertiary waves of urbanisation that came into contact with the farm. New developments begin jockeying for increasingly less and more expensive land, buildings are squeezed into smaller plots and new projects start to eye up public land. Being as close to Dublin City as the town was made it an ideal location to

set up shop. While expensive, the town provided a cheaper alternative to locations within Dublin City or County Dublin while still being within relatively close proximity of both leading to high desirability. And so, these micro urbanising waves are intense in their own ways. It is worth mentioning that Commons do go some way to combat this in the fight for urban space.

Fig.15: The diggers were never far away

I mentioned the term "encroachment" above and I think it is one of the more important concepts that encircle this dissertation as a whole. To pick it apart will take some time but it is necessary to understand the feeling of precarity felt by my interlopers in the CSA. Encroachment can manifest in physical space but also impacts on the psychological mind space on those subjected to the feeling on being encroached upon. Encroachment is both the physical act of transforming space and the ideological weight it carries. If we return to the example of the empty site turn warehouse beside Feirm Bheag it offers the most tangible examples of this encroachment. While not affecting the humans of the CSA or the land it was situated on directly the relatively rapid transformation of a once empty "undeveloped" field into a building site then a large warehouse affected the farm indirectly in noticeable ways. The effects were mostly felt by the humans of Feirm Bheag and were of a psychological sort. There is a visceral-ness to the transformation of "natural" land into something "unnatural", this visual transformation being remarked on repeatedly by participants when construction began. However, we humans are excellent

at adapting to our environments. This is a double-edge blade as it was not long until the remarks on the developments surrounding the farm reduced to a trickle. It was not long till I myself began not to notice the enormous mound of soil, standing at roughly 10 meters tall, not 50 meters from the farm, or the large skeleton of the warehouse towering above the hedge that once obscured the adjacent field from view. Every once in a while, if there was a noticeably sudden change to the make-up of either sites, people would share in a concerned glance but by and large they simply became part of the landscape. There is also the question of whether the physical encroachment of urban development has a direct impact of the non-human of the CSA. There is no doubt that the non-human animals who called the CSA and the wooded areas to the rear of the farm felt the impacts of this development. While I cannot claim to know how the non-humans particularly felt about the whole situation these feelings were imagined by research participants. A considerable shake-up of one's environment over a short space of time would no doubt have its effects. It is well documented the detrimental effects that human activity can have on the habitats of animals. The insects, birds and small mammals who would frequent the CSA had limited space before the building of the aircraft parts warehouse and school extensions that both began during my fieldwork but there is no doubt that the construction work reduced this already limited space. The flora of the area would not escape unscathed either, with swathes of meadow and trees removed to make room for the steel and asphalt.

Sovereignty, Authenticity and Feeling Good

> *'Although contemporary societies throughout the world are diverse in many ways, they are all liable to become subordinated to the logic of the capitalistic firm.'*
>
> *– Fraser, 2017*

The CSA often felt like a last bastion of sorts. A custodian of a time before the motorway and warehouses even though the motorway pre-existed the farm by some 18 years. Of course, this is a rose-tinted way of imagining with the CSA and the surrounding area but I could not help myself feel as though the farm itself generated a protective forcefield from the hustle and bustle of modernity. It is well known that spending time in parks, gardens, allotments, or community farms has countless positive effects on both mind and body. For me these positive effects became embodied in a sense being shielded from the outside world. On the other hand there was also a sense of foreboding, thoughts of what came after once one left the sanctuary of the CSA. For much of the time I spent at Feirm Bheag I felt an underlying, mild but ever-present, sense of siege-mentality. The farm was surrounded on all sides with the sprawling urbanisation at the gates. This was only intensified by the seeming lack of engagement

by governing authorities in times of need, be it grant applications or responding to concerns regarding the lease. I related my feelings to some of my research participants and found that I was not alone in the feelings although surely they manifest differently from person to person. This siege mentality was thus two fold, the immediate feeling being felt by the individual, this being centred on one's life after they left the confines of the farm. The second was the grander scale ominous feeling that came with the knowledge that Feirm Bheag could be taken away from us at any time with little warning. It will come as no surprise that any visitor purporting to be a council representative or anyone wearing a hardhat was treated with a certain level of suspicion.

When contemplating sovereignty I am confronted with a number of quandaries. There are the questions of the CSA's sovereignty itself; from its landlord, the expectations placed upon it and from wider societal pressures more generally. Perhaps, however, the most interesting dilemmas present themselves when one begins to ponder the questions of sovereignty involved in the relationship between the human sphere and the non-human sphere. The first relates to how we as humans construct the relationship between ourselves and other non-humans in this case mainly plants in regard to what we consider is sovereign in its own right versus what is not. The second relates to and edges somewhat outside the remit of anthropology perhaps, the question of whether sovereignty in the human sense can be attributed to the non-human at all. We must also consider whether the sovereignty from the abstract mainstream that the CSA attempts to resist is nothing more than an illusion. The activities of resistance, the alternative farming and all it encompasses, are of course real acts but the question revolves around whether the acts of resistance are actually resisting anything. Or, as previously mentioned, are they ideas of resistance packaged up and sold by neoliberal capitalism. It is a resistance created through consumption. And if this is true does this sovereignty resemble a commodity? Erin DeMuynck, in her research on an urban farmers' market situated in an unspecified city in the Mid-West United States, notes that 'Performing and displaying one's beliefs and ethics through shopping at farmers' markets, talking about it, and posting about it online are ways people construct their identities' (2019,12). DeMuynck is quite sceptical of the whole farmers' market operation suggesting that it fits directly in with neoliberal ideals of urban development and redevelopment and in the process masks the potentially harmful effects it produces. While Feirm Bheag and CSAs in general do not participate in farmers' markets they are not immune from the practices that unwittingly reinforce neoliberal ideals of the power of individual consumer choice. At a base level, 'farmers' markets and sustainability, localism, and greening do not necessarily challenge neoliberal logic at a fundamental level, but rather can be and are being used to reinforce it' (2019,15).

There is also a question of "feeling good". Sovereignty through feeling good applies to being physically at the farm and to the consumption of the food from the farm. A sense of control, of self-governance or striving toward something was mentioned to me on a number of occasions. As Tina during one of our first conversations put it, *'I'm part of something that's really really really important, and part of a community that's striving towards something that's not gonna take over the world, which is something good for the sake of it.'* Through the food itself it was possible to regain control over what was being eaten and therefore regain control of one's body. This form of sovereignty, that of one's own body, is far more individualistic and intimate than that of the larger scale self-governance of Feirm Bheag as an organisation but the two are connected. This feeling of feeling good is also rooted in a sense of authenticity. Authenticity of self but also of Feirm Bheag and of the food it produces. This harks back to our discussion of the "real" food the farm produces as opposed to that of food found in the supermarket. The "reality" of the food was often equated to it being in its most authentic state due to the lack of artificial chemicals and machinery involved in its production.

Sovereignty through Labour

A rather draconian sounding title to this section but with it comes a concept worth considering, that of "meaningful labour", and of Peter Kropotkin's anarchy described within "Fields, Factories and Workshops" (1901[1899]). Kropotkin is considered by many as a classical anarchist. Being a staunch critic of capitalism, he believed that the only way for people, or workers and peasants to be more precise, to free themselves from oppression required the ruination of capitalism and for it to be replaced with anarchy or statelessness. In much of the conversations with participants during my time at Feirm Bheag anti-capitalist sentiment was not uncommon although it lacked the militancy of the generally found in anarchist rhetoric. Not to mention that it seemed difficult to reconcile the anarchist mentality of many of the volunteers with that of the innate (a-) political nature of the Feirm Bheag project[13]. That is not to say that there was no presence of anarchistic rhetoric but it was not something collectively expressed, unless one could include a self-professed political ambivalence as anarchist, perhaps in some regards it is. Regardless of what the outcome of Kropotkin's beliefs in an anarchistic utopia, what was occurring at Feirm Bheag could be labelled as "meaningful labour", and meaningful in two senses of the word. Firstly, in terms of Kropotkin it is meaningful in the sense that it is working toward removing capitalism but also create new spaces for alternative action; 'Kropotkin delineated the parameters within which individuals and groups in anarchy might operate, all while encouraging them to act for themselves: take local initiatives, engage in continuous, rebellious action, and carve out new spaces' (Kinna 2007, 70). Like any anti-capitalist theory worth its salt Kropotkin's arguments were also heavily critical of the division of labour with his thoughts on the end result being 'pitiless oppression, massacre of children,

[13] Even though anarchism is political in its own right.

pauperism, and insecurity of life' (1901, 39). If he were alive today I have little doubt that environmental upheaval and runaway climate change would be added to the list. The other meaningfulness being that which is "enriching" or "fulfilling", by which I mean meaning through 'manual, intellectual and creative activity' (Livesey 2011, 275). Through the process of meaningful labour, a form of sovereignty, even within a neoliberal eco-socioeconomic system was fostered at Feirm Bheag. These two types of meaningfulness are intertwined and create a positive feedback loop, whereby local alternative action initiatives spawn manual, intellectual and creative activity, which in turn informs more action, and so on. This results in what I consider a sort of sovereignty through labour, through acting out alterity, be it through practice, language or thought. Put plainly through coming to Feirm Bheag and taking part in the process of growing the food and all the other activities that come attached to this central act one actively contributes to a collective sovereignty, even if only temporarily, all the while creating and affirming values many of which are in opposition to neoliberal capitalism. It must be mentioned here that much of this perceived sovereignty is possibly illusionary due to the individualistic, consumerist driven, choice to become involved with the CSA. I connect this to the concept of the green middle class we discussed earlier. But ultimately it may be that these labour actions are one of the limited possibilities left for generating some form of sovereignty in the world of late-stage capitalism. In the next chapter we will be shifting gears somewhat. Through different yet connected realms of experience we will investigate how the CSA becomes a place of dialogue and perhaps even conflict between the different "thought worlds" that collide there.

Fig.16: Sovereignty through Meaningful Labour

Summer

Chapter IV: Life-World Experience(s)

'By watching the birds on the banks of the river that morning in Tena I certainly got out of my head in the colloquial sense, but what was I stepping into?'

– Kohn 2013, 57

Life-World Experience(s)

In this chapter I wish to make the following argument; Feirm Bheag is a place of dialogue between worlds of experience, what Whorf (1956) would term "thought worlds". Within "thought worlds" people can re-experience a more "agricultural" lifeworld which, given their suburban lives, they are less likely to experience in their day to day lives. In urban/suburban places, these lifeworlds generally exist on the fringes of each other but one who enters a CSA is exposed to their intermingling (or clashing perhaps) leaving one struggling for cultural concepts and linguistic terms to explain their experiences. It is this exposure and response to the encounter of more than one lifeworld that this chapter will highlight. Concepts from Whorf's *Language, Thought, and Reality* (1956) will play important parts in the following chapter. The reason I use Whorf is for one of his central tenets, inspired by none other than physicist Albert Einstein, that language binds us to particular cultural concepts which help us interpret the world in particular ways aiding humans to perceive reality differently. Reality itself of course doesn't change just the ways in which we are quipped to understand do, similar to Einsteinian assertions on the relativity of observation. This relativity, this "habitual thought" that Whorf posits is the backbone of the discussion on lifeworld "experiences" below. Before going any further, please allow me to provide you with a rather lengthy quotation from Whorf (1956) which I think will do an excellent job preparing you for the following discussion;

'*By "habitual thought" and "thought world" I mean more than simply language, i.e. than the linguistic patterns themselves. I include all the analogical and suggestive values of the patterns…and all the give-and-take between language and the culture as a whole, wherein a vast amount that is not linguistic but yet shows the shaping influence of language. In brief, this "thought world" is the microcosm that each man carries about within himself, by which he measures and understands what he can of the macrocosm.*'

– Whorf 1956,147

I want to introduce two very broad ideas; that of "agricultural experience" and "industrial scientific experience". Both of these have many qualities including their own temporalities. I do not mean to set these up in opposition to each other rather "industrial scientific experience" (read primarily Western) is borne out of an "agricultural experience" that is much more ubiquitous across all of humanity. Thus what we are dealing with here is no dichotomy. The "industrial scientific experience" has certainly become the prominent locus of experience in the West, arguably best seen as the "naturalist" way, or Moore's "geo-managerial" (2018) way of understanding the world. "Agricultural experience" on the other hand encompasses much more, constituting countless life-worlds even if said life-worlds now exist in an "industrial scientific" dominated world. The two of these account for again in the broadest of terms the formulation of all human life-worlds on the planet. To a certain extent they also account for much of the construction of non-human experience as well albeit in different ways. It is important to note here, however, that I do not mean that human conceptions of the world are the catalyst for non-human experience. I simply mean that by virtue of the prevalence of human society invariably non-human life will be affected. There is a relativity here, 'a relativity of "habitual thought" or default conceptualization that emerges from, but is distinct from, linguistic categorical structure' (Silverstein 2000, 98[Whorf 1956]). This "habitual thought" is central to the analogous distinctions between "agricultural experience" and "industrial scientific experience". This is not a relativity of "reality" itself but instead of the relative experiences and language of it. We humans are capable of experiencing the world through both "agricultural experience" and "industrial scientific experience" but generally we tend toward one over the other. In the West it is places like Feirm Bheag where the two worlds of experience meet. As we will see later on in this chapter the CSA is a place of dialogue and at times perhaps conflict between the two "experiences". There is much minutia that these two concepts gloss over of course and they are not universal. However, the distinctions between the "agricultural experience" and the "industrial scientific experience" can be understood as a general phenomenon for the former and as a particular phenomenon for the latter. The most important thing to understand about these two life-worlds of experience is that the "agricultural experience" is analogous to the "industrial scientific experience" and vice versa. In other words, those who lean toward one tend to understand the other through analogy, but both are real. The idea of the "habitual thought world", conceptualised by Whorf, is comparable to that of the "experiences". To once again quote Silverstein on the "habitual thought world" it is 'a complex, emergent, partly analogically driven conceptual orientation that is absolutely "real" to the people in whom in emerges' (Silverstein 2000, 125). One might be asking can we refine these two broad ideas. We'll begin with the "industrial scientific experience" as it is the one we might be more familiar with. The "industrial scientific experience" is the predominant sociocultural experience that frames the life-world of the West. I understand that there is much minutia that this conceptualisation glosses over such as our prime ethnographic source; the CSA. There is also the issue of what the "West" actually constitutes as there are many differing formulations of "The West". As McNeill says 'What the West means in any given context, therefore, depends entirely upon who is

invoking the term and for what purposes' (1997, 514). For our purposes it might be beneficial to define the "industrial scientific experience" as just that, a set of cultural concepts that are embedded in the historical and current processes that have resulted in the industrially and scientific, one could add reductionist, discourse at the forefront of thinking originating in 17th century Europe. Thus, another possibility although a limited one is to define the "industrial experience" as modernity. In this formulation the process of modernity is the growing absence of non-humans from the human domain, a run-of-the-mill division of Nature and Culture. The "agricultural experience" on the other hand is arguably even more difficult to define succinctly for it encompasses a much larger time period. Potentially from the beginning of human civilisation, and a greater number of peoples around the planet. Its historicity is thus of less importance than its general characteristics for our purposes. We could simply define it as in opposition to the "industrial scientific experience" and in some ways this would be true but it is an oversimplification and as has been stated the "industrial scientific experience" was borne out of the more general "agricultural" one. Much like McNeill's comment on defining the West the same can apply here. One could also align it more with "indigenous" philosophies and life-worlds which again in some ways would be true and this may be the best way to think about it for our purposes. It is just important to note that the "agriculture experience" as a life-world framework is not limited to indigenous peoples, they are simply the most likely to regiment more of their lives according to it. Alongside this there is another possible distinction I will explore, and bring up again in chapter 6, animated non-human "living selves" (Kohn 2013) which may in fact be the largest distinction between the two sets of experience. In "industrial scientific experience" the non-human is generally conceptualised through a reductionist commodifying set of concepts whereas in the "agricultural experience", as seen through the examples of the Hopi and Runa peoples, the non-human is not limited in such a way. In the "agricultural experience" 'How other kinds of beings see us matter' (Kohn 2013, 1).

Thus far we have established these two rather crude life-worlds – two sets of experiences each with their own culturally and linguistically elaborated cultural concepts. The next question to answer is how these two "experiences" come into existence. The cultural concepts within both "grow" out of the life-worlds via language. Language and reality get imbedded through these agricultural and industrial scientific life-worlds; hence myth, culture, grows out of them via language. Language "grows" out from the cultural concepts, grammar, ecology, and soil as well; 'Much like myths, languages were also the products of complementary historical processes' (Bunzl 1996, 69). This does not account for all of semiosis, both that of human and of non-human, the relationships resulting from this semiosis, the exchange of signs, being an important facet of the "agricultural experience". This does go beyond the current discussion of culturally and linguistically embedded cultural concepts, hence the reason Kohn (2013) dubbed it "beyond the human" but this is something we will return to in chapter 6. To return to

the role of language in elaborating cultural concepts, take for example the Hopi term "tunátya", which Whorf draws our attention to (1956), generally translated to mean "hope". But the word means much more than to simply "hope"; 'the verb tunátya contains in its ideas of hope something of our words "thought", "desire", and "cause", which sometimes must be used to translate it… It refers to the state of the subjective, unmanifest, vital and causal aspects of the Cosmos, and the fermenting activity toward fruition and manifestation with which is seethes' (1956, 61). This word "tunátya", to "hope", this nascency, is found to encompass much, as Whorf continues to say; 'the Hopi see this burgeoning activity in the growing of plants, the forming of clouds and their condensation in rain, the careful planning out of the communal activities of agriculture and architecture, and in all human hoping, wishing, striving, and taking thought; and as most especially concentration in prayer' (1956, 62). This word has attained a "cosmic scope of reference", encompassing 'the thought of a people, a culture, a civilization, even of an era' (1956, 61). And while not its sole source, "tunátya" clearly gives meaning to, but also derives meaning from, agricultural practices and natural processes; agricultural experience. One could draw similarities to the number of words there is in the Irish language for a field (Mangan, 2020). This one term illuminates important cultural conceptions, a core philosophy and the spirituality, of the Hopi. To add a comparison from the English language, we can take the verb "grow" or the noun "growth", undoubtedly one could find other comparable words across the SAE spectrum. In Irish[14], for example, one might use the nouns "borradh" (swell), or "méadú" (increase) to describe the "growth" of something, or the verb "ag fás" for "growing". "Growth" as a descriptive word has come to mean a plethora of phenomena in the English language manifesting in cultural concepts in both the realms of agricultural and industrial scientific experience. When one is referring to plants as I have and will be in the majority of cases in this thesis, "growth" or "growing" is a physical thing. The "growing" of a plant is describing its physical transformation from a seed to a fully formed plant. Or, if we take one of the primary definitions provided to us by the Oxford dictionary, it is 'to manifest vigorous life; to put forth foliage, flourish, be green.' "Growth" can also refer to specific parts of the growing process, particularly in relations to the fruit bearing process of the plant, i.e. one might remark that the French beans have had fantastic growth over the last couple of weeks. Specifically, if we look at phenomena generally included within the industrial scientific set of cultural concepts, "growth" can refer to a number of things as well but a prime example would be the immaterial growth of financial markers (ag méadú), be that of a company's share prices, a country's GDP, or any number of economic "growth indicators". This is a "growth" as a commodity of sorts.

[14] There are, in fact, a large number of words for "growth" in Irish (as Gaeilge), the terms not being limited to the three I mention here.

"Growth" can also apply to the human in the physical, mental and spiritual domains. Cultural concepts themselves "grow" out of the lifeworld via language. "Growth" in this sense would best be understood as emerging or flourishing. Much like plants we physically grow throughout our adolescent years. *Fiche blian ag fás.*[15] Mental growth is something that occurs over a lifetime, be it in terms of personal "growth", i.e. emotional, intellectual, social, and "growing as a person". One could wrap up spiritual growth in with the examples of mental growth mentioned but I feel it is important to distinguish it due to the importance it has in our discussions on the non-human. Spiritual growth is little more difficult to pin down to any particular process or category. With that said, however, spiritual growth was one of the more remarked upon topics with research participants. Spiritual growth is something incredibly personal and so it is difficult for me to say what it meant to each person who mentioned it but generally it involved a renewed "connection", to the land, the nonhuman plants and animals, to other people. Feirm Bheag, in most cases, seemed to be a part of this spiritual growth more so than its source. The notion of being "present" or "in the moment" was also common. Even when not explicitly marked as such, the valuing of the "here and now" seemed to carry a spiritual element. Tina, the volunteer, once remarked that; *'It's very very special to go somewhere, to be in the presence of other people that have maybe not the exactly the same worldview as you do…but that like they value the same things, you know…like valuing the here and now.'* Particularly with Tina almost every conversation I had with her would invariably end up as a discussion on some philosophical quandary or spiritual meditation. We will look at some more of her comments in more detail later in this chapter. Feirm Bheag was, and still is, a place of "growth" in many senses of the word. The most obvious of these is the plants themselves from which the word derives much of its meaning. There is also undoubtedly various kinds of personal human growth and the growth of the CSA. The Hopi "tunátya" could apply much more readily to the experiences emerging from Feirm Bheag as comparison, as we will see in the next chapter the concept of "hope", of "hoping for", plays are part in the experience of Feirm Bheag. The interpretation of "tunátya" as found in the "the burgeoning activity" of the growing of plants raises interesting parallels. There is the hope in that the plants themselves will grow and bear fruit but also hope in the growth of the people involved in with farm and of the farm itself. The CSA could be said to generate a future oriented "hope". If we look to Kohn's (2013) ethnography we also find a similar linguistic phenomenon, in Quichua words like "ta ta" and "pu oh", of particular interest, however, is the utterance "teeeye". This is less word as it is a vocalisation, an "image in sound" as Kohn puts it. The image in sound that "teeeye" represents is that of a gun firing and, most importantly for our discussion, successfully hitting one's target. Similar to the Hopi term "tunátya", "teeeye" not only brings linguistic manifestation to the sound of a gun firing, 'it is a representation of a future brought into the present in the hopes that this not-yet will affect the present' (2013,36), in relation to the hitting of the target. In other words, the term, in some ways like "tunátya", is an utterance of "hope" as much as it is a linguistic

[15] Derived from Muiris Ó Súilleabháin

representation. Unlike the Hopi, in which "tunátya" can refer to a great deal of things, 'Lowland Quichua has hundreds of "words" like ta ta, pu oh, and tsupu that mean by virtue of the ways in which they sonically convey an image of how an action unfolds in the world' (2013,31). These words, much like Hopi "tunátya" and "growth" in English, are a clear example of how cultural concepts are culturally and linguistically embedded.

Fig.17: Growth

Kohn offers a general way to think about these cultural concepts; 'The human mind, we can all agree, traffics in generalities, abstractions, and categories. Another way to say this is that form is central to human thought…constraints on possibility emerge with our distinctively human ways of thinking, which result in a pattern that here I call form. For example, the associational logic of symbolic reference, which is so central to human thought and language, results in the creation of general concepts, such as, say, the word bird' (Kohn 2013, 156-157). "Hope" might very well be one of these patterns that span across life-worlds and temporalities. Not only is it linguistically and culturally embedded it is also a bi-temporal concept.

Hopi, Runa, and Bi-Temporality

In the section just above we introduced both the Runa and the Hopi as interesting comparisons to the phenomena at Feirm Bheag. Citing Boas, Bunzl states; 'In one respect, every language was the product of an ethnically idiosyncratic point of view. Each individual language classified the "infinitely varied" range of personal experience into separate units, which differentiate so greatly from language to language' (1996, 69). With this in mind, and the discussion of "tunátya" let us look at these comparisons a more closely. I am going to start by introducing the concept of bi-temporal experience which is an inherent characteristic that emerges from the interactions between the realms of agricultural and industrial scientific experiences. Each of these experiences has, for all intents and purposes, its own temporality governed by different sets of cultural concepts and language. To briefly mention why "time", and "space", are important to think about it is because it reflects something about the cultural concepts informing but also resulting from them; 'Seeking to contrast cultural concepts of "space" and "time", Whorf eventually looks to different cultures of mensuration, the institutional focus on practical acts of measurement that result in rational, denotational use of verbal expressions as "fashions of speaking" about a society's measurable phenomena' (Silverstein 2000, 102). We will come back to "fashions of speaking" later on in the chapter. Thus, examining how a culture measures something, be it space or time, can elude to deeper understandings of a life-world. What Whorf found was that 'the Hopi language is capable of accounting for and describing correctly, in a pragmatic or operational sense, all observable phenomenon in the Universe' (Whorf 1956, 58), even though the system through which they do this is different from that of SAE languages. As we noted earlier the cultural concepts of a life-world manifest through said life-world via language. "Space" and "time" are thus cultural concepts, contingent within local communities and within their languages and cultures. These cultural concepts are semiotic entities but they are also, importantly, grounded in lived experience and also in linguistic structure. As Silverstein (2000) notes, lived experience and linguistic structure influence each other a great deal. Let us investigate what result this in-flux temporality, what we can call the liminal experience a sort of "bi-temporal-ness", might have. Again this is not something unique to Western peoples, we can see examples of this way of thinking with both the Hopi and the Ávila Runa. These groups of people are very aware of "industrial scientific experience". In the case of the Runa, Kohn illustrates that their long history with Spanish colonisers, and present day Ecuadorians, has left deep impressions on their worldview. From the way they perceive themselves as "good Christians" to the consumption industrially produced goods (bar food which Kohn stresses), the Runa are far from disconnected from this life-world experience. However, it is not what calibrates their daily life-world, this is very much within the wider "agricultural experience". Although there are legitimate questions as to how hunting fits specifically into the "agricultural experience", the Runa are no doubt much more

immersed in this life-world, at least for the time being.[16] It is important to remember that, as Silverstein notes; 'Whorf's point is that the cultural concepts of "space" and of "time" are just that: cultural concepts' (Silverstein 2000, 104). And so we humans, particularly as we have seen peoples like the Hopi and the Runa, experience or are aware of two different ways of understanding the world around us. This includes ideas of "space" and "time" of which the "agricultural experience" and "industrial scientific experience" generate multiple instances of. We are, at the very least, bi-temporal beings. This "bi-temporality" is an analogically driven one, while it does shape life-worlds it does not mean that people inhabit different temporal states simply that through analogy there are different ways of experiencing the world. If we first look to the Hopi in Whorf's work we see that they do indeed exist in a "bi-temporal" state, between an cultural life-world, primarily grounded in the "agricultural experience" which regiments much of their lives, an "agricultural-linguistic-temporal" structure, and an "industrial scientific experience" which they understood as analogy through their interactions with others, presumably this being with Western Americans and to make a living. To reiterate, the Hopi understand and experience both, but are firmly grounded in the "agricultural experience" with the "industrial scientific experience" being understood through analogy to the former. According to Whorf, the Hopi language marks things like duration and change in ways that do not conform directly to the ways that Western concepts of past, present and future are categorised in SAE. Yet 'the Hopi language is capable of accounting for and describing correctly, in a pragmatic or operational sense, all observable phenomenon in the Universe' (1956, 58). The Ávila Runa would appear to operate in a similar "bi-temporal" way with one realm of experience being understood and experienced as analogy to another. In Kohn's ethnography, he illustrates how the Runa, while regimenting much of their lives through what could be called a "hunting experience", their interaction with the "industrial scientific experience" is limited, although it is steadily becoming a larger facet of their lives. Not to mention, as Kohn points out early on in his book; 'Ávila Runa are far removed from any imagery of a pristine or wild Amazon. Their world – their very being – is thoroughly informed by a long and layered colonial history' (2013,3). Interestingly, however, food was the one area in which the Runa do not engage with the industrial scientific process, as 'almost all the food they shared with each other and with me came from their gardens, the nearby rivers and streams, and the forest' (2013,5). Kohn does acknowledge that some Runa live on what we would recognise as more traditional farms, although even these are not subject to heavily industrialised agricultural processes. Many of the Runa that Kohn spends time with rarely interact with wider Ecuadorian society unless it is to buy certain things such as guns or clothing. Yet, as we saw in the earlier in this chapter, they have language to refer to many things one might categorise as "industrial scientific" which elude to deep culture concepts, the gun, the word "chicken" and Kohn's discussion on what "whiteness" means to the Runa are but three examples. We in the West tend to experience this bi-temporal-ness in the opposite way, substituting the "industrial scientific experience"

[16] Kohn comments that the "industrial" world of wider Ecuador is slowly encroaching further into Runa villages.

as the primary lens through which our reality is generated. We harbour an, usually incredibly limited, "agricultural experience" through analogy of the scientific industrial one. Of course, there are plenty of people on the island of Ireland that have their own "agriculture experience" but we tend to regiment our lives through an "industrial scientific" temporality and create and maintain cultural concepts via a language that reinforce the "industrial scientific experience". In Ireland, like many places in the West, this temporality is not created in some sort of neoliberal vacuum chamber. In fact, it is heavily informed by the wider "agricultural experience" even if this is not necessarily a conscious phenomenon. A prime example of this is the Irish secondary school summer holidays which last for three months; June, July, and August. While I doubt many students would complain about having three months off from school the original idea was that the three months would enable students to help their parents around the farm in the busy summer months. With 63% of the Irish population living in urban areas, according to the latest census carried out in 2016, the majority of school students are no longer required to help out on the family farm during the summer yet the school calendar remains the same. Some might also cite daylight savings time when the clocks are moved back an hour as another vestige of a time when agriculture played a prominent role in Western timekeeping. While it is true that moving the clocks back has ramifications for many human, and non-human, activities, including farming, the practice has little to do with agriculture. Instead the practice finds its origins in the West, implemented by the U.K. and Canada, among others, during the First World War at the beginning of the twentieth century[17]. In 1916 it was employed as a strategy to reduce energy usage due to Europe-wide fuel shortages and the general cost of the war. Another example of the interplay between cultural concept and language. Hence we might include here an insight provided by Kohn, 'Utterances, then, are more variable, less constrained, and "messier" than the concept they express' (2013, 158).

As we shift our focus away from the above toward the specific manifestations of the interactions between the two realms of experience at Feirm Bheag two comments made to me, the first from Aryn and the second from Elsie.

> *'Well, I always say that capitalism, just the time, you know, it really wants to capture every bit of your time.'*

This comment from Aryn which specifically references the "capture of time" illustrates one of the ways temporality is perhaps experienced in the "industrial scientific".

[17] Shorton, n.d.

'It's time consuming, the smallest amount and plants just take a huge amount of time to do and we count time so much nowadays…I think you just kind of forget time exists when you're walking and working there.'

Perhaps what Elsie was experiencing was a shifting of experience. Something that Feirm Bheag seemed to be able to instil in many who visited and worked there. Not any of sort of literal shift in experience of course, but a changing of perspective. As we have already established it is not as though we in the West are completely oblivious to "agricultural experience", it is still very much a part of Irish "industrial scientific experience". What Elsie is potentially referring to here is something I mentioned earlier in this chapter; the shift in tendency from one experience to another, if only temporary. Where "industrial scientific" temporality is stifling, it is the temporality of capital, of what Walter Benjamin (1969) would call a "homogeneous empty time", Feirm Bheag's formulation of the "agricultural" temporality is that of "jetztzeit", of the revolutionary "now". This "jetztzeit" is rhythmic, i.e. the sowing of seeds, the growing of plants, harvesting, repeat. In a sense similar to Benjamin's example of Robespierre and ancient Rome, the CSA is a dialectic "tiger's leap" into a recent, defined past, but also possibly further into an undefined past.

A Place of Dialogue

'The lack of communities and the lack of like hope for the future. And I think that kind of like in terms of climate change, and you know, like actually building places like Feirm Bheag and building places where you can actually go and be like, hey we're doing something good.' – Tina

At Feirm Bheag we run into a rare set of phenomena in the urbanised West. Here people who experience their life-world through an "industrial scientific" lens are brought into dialogue with a way of experiencing the world that has been largely neglected. As we have seen up to this point the "agricultural experience" and the "industrial scientific experience" both co-exist. One does not simply replace the other as they are both in states of flux within an individual and in a society. If we take the Irish, Western, lifeworld it is more or less dominated by an "industrial scientific experience" but there are vestiges of the more general "agricultural experience". The latter become far more pronounced at a place like Feirm Bheag. Referring back to the quote at the beginning of this chapter and some of the comments made by participants in the previous chapter it was if stepping onto the farm was like steeping into a different life-world, a different realm of experience. A life-world mostly understood through

analogy yet now more "real". This sense of "real" and the attempts to understand in relation to the "industrial scientific" life-world in which they are rooted. These new, or renewed, cultural concepts "grow" out of the land and out of this life-world dialogue. Through re-experiencing an agriculture life-world, an "agricultural experience", the people of Feirm Bheag, including myself, attempted to explain it through analogy through discourses grounded in our predominantly "industrial scientific experience", through spiritual and political understandings to name but a couple. In conversations with research participants one can tease out these struggles to grasp and understand a new set of "experiences". Experiences that are not totally unfamiliar to us, as already mentioned we exist in a bi-experiential and bi-temporal state. The experiences of Feirm Bheag not only allowed for the development of new vocabulary about this analogous "agricultural experience" but also potentially gave rise to new ways of speaking about and understanding the "industrial scientific experience" their life-world was firmly rooted in. I believe one can see an example of this in the following quote from Elsie; *'Maybe that's the difference, the slowing down that you feel when you're doing all this just plain physical work. It's kind of in contrast to what [has] become normal of being on the treadmill rushing around.'* An analogy of being off the treadmill, a crossing of the veil of sorts, allowing for this re-experiencing of the agricultural life-world. Within these words, there is also a sense of the present, the "now".

Tina, being deeply interested in not only her own spirituality but that of her community and society at large contemplated the tensions between the "industrial scientific experience" and the possibility of another; *'I think it's very important as well, particularly now probably, since the dawn of Western civilisation anyways, to try as hard as we can to connect to some sort of spirituality, because like, if you look at capitalism, money, the market. That's the god…we all believe that there's something more powerful than us, that's like a nice belief in a human psyche, that there's something more.'* She would go on to say that while a belief in a higher power was something good, it wasn't ideal that the current idols of worship were the deities of capitalism. I say another here instead of the "agricultural experience" specifically as I do not think it would do justice to the level of depth Tina considered these relationships. To quote Tina again directly related to her thought above; *'Everybody has, whether it's the nice car or it's the beautiful woman, whether it's a fantastic holiday, the big house, designer shoes, whatever, there's something that you're striving for or yearning for…if it's anything that is attainable like with your hands, and with like this "false self", I suppose, like the idea if you're chasing this with your "false self" you're going to be sick, and we live in this false world.'* Although I don't have her explicit thoughts on the matter I feel it safe to assume that the god of capitalism would fit in a false god in the "false world" we find ourselves living in. Through reading about facets of the "agricultural experience", in such books as "The Hidden Life of Trees" (Wohlleben 2015) among many others I imagine, Tina told me how she began to question the cultural concepts she had accepted as fact; *'I very much believed in the scientific method like there are facts and there are, you know, these universal*

things that are true…I approached very quickly, and was introduced to, the whole idea that that no that's not necessarily true.' She later told me she had expanded her reading to *'microbes and mental health and healing and all that jazz'*. She would tell me all of this as we planted seedlings or dug out fully grown plants, remarking on how amazing it was that this was food we grew ourselves. Tina's experiences here are somewhat reminiscent of Ness' thoughts on visitors to Yosemite National Park, of which she says, 'cultural performances…constitute culturally salient patterns of activity in which visitors may come to terms not only with who they have been meant to be, symbolically speaking, but also with who they, in point of undeniable fact, actually are – with the 'stuff' of which they are made, as living organisms and as forms of human life' (Ness 2016, 4). Tina's spiritual thoughts are only one example of the wider contemplation of one who is and what they are made of which comes from the meeting of the lifeworlds at Feirm Bheag. Tina's journey began before Feirm Bheag but if anything her experiences there only strengthened her resolve to understand new life-worlds. Tina, again, highlighted an interesting point on the "industrial scientific experience" at large;

> *'Love and connection, there's nothing else beyond that which is why, like, we live in a kind of sick world. Because, instead of loving things, we turn around and we resist. Yeah, we're like oh, no, like absolutely not we're not gonna do that, like we don't love ourselves. We don't love each other, you know, we're actually disconnected and like same thing with spirituality…but like you can't not, you can't be a human [and] not spiritual, I don't think. It's like hardwired in our DNA as like eons ago when human beings looked at the sun and worshipped it.'*

To remark on the effects the CSA may have on the bi-temporality of experience I believe it has the potential to refocus the tendency from industrial scientific temporality toward agricultural temporality. As mentioned previously this is not to say that people who involved themselves with Feirm Bheag are not aware at some level of their bi-temporality, we all are, but with that said it is possible that one might gain a new level of awareness from the experience. To bring up something said to me by Amy I cited in chapter 2; *'It brings you right into the moment and I think like the, the texture and feeling of the plants and the soil and the cold days and the hot days and being outside in the fresh air is super beneficial and then also like engaging with the plants and like not having ever really seen plants growing.* As with how through 'the dissemination of linguistic traits, any given tongue was likely to be modified by elements originating in different languages' (Bunzl 1996, 70), temporal understandings can also be transferred in the same way, through cultural concepts mediated by language. We in the West regiment our lives in a similar way to the Hopi and Runa. However this is done through industrial scientific institutions according to industrial scientific time. In our day to day lives, clock time is the socially agreed objective marker of the passage of the present moment. And it is not unusual for our internal

sense of the passage of time, some might say that this ties in closer with “agricultural experience”, to come into conflict with clock time. Munn (1992) makes many the distinction between different forms of time-reckoning, one of interest to us is that of time reckoning through bodily activity in relation to the movements of the sun using the example of the Nebilyer Valley people. In this example Munn shows how the Sun acts as a timing device, the “nonbodily spatiotemporal motion” of which is ‘symbolically referred to a bodily motion, and vice versa’ (1992, 104). In other words, the motion of the Sun is a symbolic time keeping device used to reckon time relative to a particular action or task and vice versa. The other form of time-reckoning of interest to us is “clock time”, often associated with the West. Both are mutually affected by their interaction. Why these two are of interest to us is that one can see something of a confluence between these two concepts of time-reckoning at Feirm Bheag. Referencing Polanyi (1975), Munn states that ‘time-reckoning in general is constituted not merely in the conceptual reference point or codified system of timing, but also in the actor's "attending to" (160:34) such a reference point as part of a project that engages the past and future in the present-the space-time or "here-now" of the project. Actors are not only "in" this time (space-time), but they are constructing it and their own time (143:11ff) in the particular kinds of relations they form between themselves (and their purposes) and the temporal reference points (which are also spatial forms)’ (Munn 1992, 104).

Returning to the idea of Feirm Bheag as a place of “growth” and “flourishing” we can directly relate this to Kohn’s conception of the forest, an area similar to the farm that is one brimming with life (although Kohn would probably contend the rainforest is a place of much more life). By tending to the plants at the CSA and animals such as bees directly and various bird species indirectly offer potentially new ways of seeing things. As Kohn says in reference to the forest; ‘attending to what those spirits of the forest can teach us about continuity, growth, and even “flourishing” can allow us to cultivate other ways of thinking about how “we” might find better ways to live in the living future’ (Kohn 2013, 196). This idea of finding better ways to live in the future, specifically a “living future” which takes into account the living things beyond the human, can relate directly back to the emerging “hope” of Feirm Bheag. I believe something Mia said to me echoes this sentiment; *‘when it’s possible to have work days and to learn skills, and be just you know, be connected with other people rather than looking out for ourselves…I think those days are gone. Definitely now people are helping each other more on skill sharing. So I think in these times, you know, we’re being challenged a lot more. And I think our way of living in the past is being challenged. So I think people are definitely looking for another way to live their lives.’* This idea of the “living future”, living in a present-turning-future in which we are aware and take into serious account the non-humans of our life-world. While the “spirits of the forest” may not be the same as the “spirits of Feirm Bheag” they offer teachings of similar things. When we think of bi-temporality it is worth thinking about the bi-temporal future as well. The “living future”

formulated by Kohn would seem to be not only the way in which many people at the CSA conceptualised their future life-world but it may very well be the only way forward in which humans and non-humans coexist in a viable life-world.

Stopping Time/Running Out

> *'Because they're busy running their day to day. Yeah, they don't have time, for anything else. They honestly don't. That's how our society has made this. It's as simple as that.'*
>
> *- Ken*

As mentioned in the last section Feirm Bheag is a place of dialogue between the "agricultural experience" and the "industrial scientific experience", whereby cultural concepts are not only questioned but also reconstituted is new formulations all of which is embedded via language. While there is historic overlap the CSA is still a place of mediation between two rather distinct life-worlds. It is through this mediation, dialogue, conflict, between these realms of new experience, in which we see the Whorfian processes really emerge. As mentioned above, the CSA was a space where these two sets of experience came into direct contact. Both my research participants and I were left grasping new worlds via analogy to recognizable ones. With powerful sensations like time running out with climate change, or the feeling of time stopping with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns alongside societies wider re-experiencing of the "agricultural experience" through a myriad of activities from walking to baking to gardening. We established at the beginning of this chapter that for Whorf one's life-world is a set of cultural concepts and language that are culturally embedded and manifest via language. We will look at this in much more specificity here through what Whorf terms "fashions of speaking", 'language use in the denotational mode – the mode of describing and evaluating the universe of conceptually graspable "reality" – is biased for each linguistic group…by what Whorf terms "fashions of speaking" about the phenomena of the universe' (Silverstein 2000,99). It is these that will round off out the discussion of this chapter, in particular the creation of new fashions of speaking. As we saw earlier in this chapter, analogy is an important way of understanding the different life-world experiences which also means that analogy plays a central role in these fashions of speaking. 'Analogy results in the apparent (re)analysis of one surface (lexical) form in terms of the grammatical-categorcial and related structural features of another form' (Silverstein 2000,100). In other words, through using an analogy one can understand a word(s), i.e. lexical form, in a different or new way than previously assigned meanings. We can extrapolate things out to fashions of speaking more generally, more specifically how change cultural conceptions and vice versa. As Silverstein points out; 'Any fashion of speaking is a sociohistorical product that over the course of cultural process reaches a certain

generativity (positive feedback toward emergent consistency in dealing with unfamiliar situations in new domains of representation)' (Silverstein 2000, 100). We can see this sociohistorical process clearly in two examples of new realms of experience, one of which has been slowly becoming more familiar: climate change, and one which has become a familiar experience faster than anything else in recent history: the COVID-19 pandemic. We can look to these two examples to see how two life-world "experiences" play out at Feirm Bheag through the creation of new fashions of speaking. Both strings of events each of seismic proportions alone can be understood and experienced via agricultural temporality and via industrial temporality, and via the conflux of overlapping analogies between them. To note, the ways these are experienced at the CSA are more than likely to be nothing like how the Hopi or Runa would experience them.

Climate change was certainly one of the primary discussion points at Feirm Bheag before the pandemic. As we saw in chapter 2, I consider it one of the major motivations for people involving themselves with the CSA although this was far more prevalent, or at least obvious, with the volunteers more so than with the paying members. An existential threat, climate change, certainly alters cultural concepts and the embedded language. At the CSA this generally manifested as the building of a verbal and mental dichotomy between, effectively, the "agricultural experience" and the established "industrial scientific experience". As stated earlier in this chapter, Feirm Bheag was a place of dialogue between these two experiential spheres, and this relationship was perhaps most evident in the dichotomous analogies. The world was "running out of time" yet the farm was "slowing" this down. As the world heated up, the CSA was an oasis of sorts. If one was to place a heat map over the Greater Dublin Area the CSA would be a little spot of blue surrounded by shades of yellow, orange, and red. This is evident in the excerpts from my conversations Aryn, Elsie, and Tina. Looking at the experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns there is a surfeit of examples of people grasping the new life-world that the virus presented. From the baking of bread, the gardening, the working from home, whole new cultural concepts, new fashions of speaking, new analogies, new language was required to comprehend the world we found ourselves in. If one was to look at any form of social media since March 2020 there is a noticeable rise in people re-experiencing things once perhaps more confined to the "agricultural experience" such as the baking (VanDerWerff, 2020), gardening (Perrone 2020) and so on. One might excuse such re-experiencing as simply comforting techniques to deal with being cooped up inside for months and to an extend this is true. However, it also signifies shifts in how people are thinking and speaking about their life-world, one only has to look at the discourse around these resurgences. Gardening and baking, alongside other activities, are referred to as a "rediscovery" or an "existential experience", as VanDerWerff says 'The world is scary and uncertain. Bread is just science. Or it's magic. Or it's both' (2020), and much like gardening or urban farming baking is about making "something" from "nothing". Another way of looking at this is that these practices are a way of experiencing something where once there was no experience at all. If we look to Feirm Bheag

specifically we also see the shifting of cultural concepts whereby the pandemic led some to revaluations, even epiphanies perhaps, on their concept of community as illustrated by a comment from Kerry during the first severe lockdown in Ireland; *'there definitely is a sort of camaraderie. Like, you know, and the sharing of skills and like people at the beginning of the lockdown, one of the members got onto the WhatsApp group saying, you know, "I'm living on my own and I'm really worried about shopping and straightaway all the support came flowing in from the group.'* That is not to say there wasn't a sense of community there before however the distinctions between the groupings laid out in chapter 2 became less clear. Ultimately the pandemic has changed almost every facet of the Western life-world, it has done much the same to many more around the planet. And while the pandemic has wrought much destruction, these new hopeful "fashions of speaking" borne from the suffering emphasize the importance of renewed connection, between both people and the "agricultural experience".

Chapter V: Hope & Popular Hopelessness

'I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope, for hope would be hope for the wrong thing'.

– T.S. Eliot

The particular thread I decided to follow with this thesis, or rather bumped into, was that of urban farming. This not being an area I had had much interaction with up until the summer of 2017. Up until that point I had been in the midst of completely my master's degree in which I was looking at the differing ideas surrounding conservation of Irish peatland in counties Offaly and Kildare. While I was aware of the history of Dublin inner-city houses having large back gardens to facilitate the growing of fruit and vegetables, it was during a discussion on peat moss that I first came into contact with the wider world of urban agriculture. Peat moss was being marketed as a "green" alternative to regular peat for energy production and as a fertiliser. I remember peat moss being framed as hopeful for the future, for those who relied on peat for their livelihood, those who relied on it to heat their homes and fertilise their plants, but also those who feared the climatic repercussions of continued peatland exploitation. In reality "peat moss" is not the saviour it has been made out to be but that is conversation for another time. The point I wish to convey is that the themes of hope and hopelessness are powerful tools that can spur change, whether that change is real or effective is another matter entirely. But as I sat in the seedling preparation polytunnel during my first visit to Feirm Bheag listening to Ken who was the head farmer at the time I remember the feeling of hope for the farm and its future coming from his description of his plans for the CSA. He had a clear vision of the future, the future he wanted, not just for the CSA but for farming, and society in general, across Ireland. The dyad that is hope and hopelessness was at play here too however. Ken was not known for his upbeat-ness and even though he was, as I would learn, uncharacteristically positive about Feirm Bheag his outlook on community farming, and human existence in general, was not what one would regard as optimistic. His plan for the rather unassuming farm was to make his future a reality but he was sure to temper his expectations. For in this life things rarely go plan. During my time at Feirm Bheag I became acutely aware of the prevailing feelings around this hope-hopelessness dyad. It was a culture of hope but also one of immense hopelessness and fear for the future. This dyad motivated particular actions in people's everyday lives as we saw in chapters 2 and 3. Spurred on by this dyad of hope and hopelessness such as in the case of Cody and his fear for his children that 'we might be the last generation to do this kind of thing', community supported agriculture attempts to make the hopeful images of utopia become reality while striving to keep the darkest dystopian fears confined to the stories of the apocalypse.

If someone on the street was asked to describe what they think the future holds there is a decent chance a vision of apocalyptic proportions would be the answer. The apocalypse comes in many shapes and sizes, from the total collapse of the global ecosystem, artificial intelligence ending all human life, alien invasion, or of course nuclear war. The imagined future, or imagined futures, often rely on the conceptions of the present. While our imaginations have been full of both dystopic and utopic visions it is hard to argue that over the last few decades, 'dystopia' has very much held a firm grip on our collective imagination. We currently live in a period of time in which the threat of apocalypse feels ever present. We just simply don't yet know what form it will take. The human imagination is incomprehensibly complex, capable of constructing whole worlds of impossible things. I do not believe it is controversial to say that our imaginations are our greatest tool as without it there would be no human civilisation. Yet, considering its importance there is a dearth of knowledge around the imagination and to this day no one fully understands how it works or even how it manifests in the first place. It is one of our biggest mysteries alongside that of consciousness. The imagination is home to the abstract thoughts that inform how we situate ourselves within our communities. It allows us to construct images of ourselves and how that relates to other people around us and the world in general. As a species the collective human imagination, the "social imagining", is at the foundation of what it means to be human and exist in a world filled with life. As Bishop, Higgins & Määttä put it '"social imagining", then, becomes the collective means through which social groups identify and fulfil their roles, as well as make sense of themselves and of the world' (2020, 33).

We imagine stories.

The popular imagination, or popular imaginary, are terms I have injected in discussion throughout the dissertation. While as a general concept it is easily grasped I would like to hammer it down in more definitive terms here before we launch into our journey through the ages of science fiction. We can do this by firstly teasing out the two parts of the term, "popular" and "imagination". Both are deceptively complex. Let's tackle "popular" first. One could simply say that for something to be popular then it must be something prevalent in a given zeitgeist and they would not be wrong. At the same time however they have not gone far enough. Popularity is much more specific than a society wide idea and contains groups' specific eccentricities depending on socio-economic or geographical determinants. One must also take into account temporal variables. In other words, what is popular is relative and is not something that is universally applicable. "Popular culture" therefore should be defined as a plural, popular cultures. Much like how we in anthropology make the distinction between Culture and cultures a similar distinction can be made. One way, and I believe one of the most important ways, to understand how these popular imaginations coalesce is through visions, and expectations, of the future. One such, powerful, expression of these visions and expectations of the future in the West (and elsewhere) is that of science-fiction or sci-fi.

Sci-fi is a method. It is a set of tools. If we go a few steps further we can define sci-fi, as with all literature as “an assemblage”, having ‘nothing to do with ideology’ (1987, 4). For as Deleuze & Guattari claim, ‘there is no ideology and never has been’ (1987, 4). Sci-fi allows us to create distant futures and far-flung worlds that, while alien in many ways when compared to our own lived reality, give us the space to engage with real world issues in countless “what if scenarios”. In many ways sci-fi is a way to generate observable collective ‘thought worlds’, something which we will discuss in the next chapter. Environmentalism gained traction during the 1960s and 1970s with sci-fi writers responding through a variety of stories and imagined worlds. In the world of sci-fi this period, particular in the U.S., struggling with the current events of the day ‘turned to metafiction, irony, pastiche, fragmentation and allegory’ (Bould & Vint 2011, 106). Topics familiar to anthropology, linguistics, culture and sex became central to sci-fi literature of this period. Stories that considered the importance of language through human, robotic and alien communication allowed authors and readers to ‘engage with the idea that language can change consciousness’ (Boult & Vint 2011, 115). Many say that it is during the late 1960s and 70s that sci-fi as a genre came into some version of maturity with which came a concerted move toward a much more critical and politically engaged literature. ‘Some depicted polluted and overpopulated dystopias, some ecological eutopias, while others insisted that the only sensible solution was to expand beyond Earth’s ecosystem into Space’ (Boult & Vint 2011, 140). The headings of the sections of an edited anthology released in 1973 offers a rather clear vision of how sci-fi was shaping up, as Bould and Vint put it: ‘‘Runes of Earth’ (1973), edited by Thomas M. Disch, organised 16 stories – addressing themes such as ubiquitous automation, nature’s disappearance from daily experience, gridlock, pollution and human extinction – under four headings that indicate ecologically-informed SF’s dystopian tendencies: ‘The Way It Is’, ‘Why It Is the Way It Is’, How it Could Get Worse’ and ‘Unfortunate Solutions’’ (2011,140). In 1968, Philip K. Dick published “Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep” in which the story tackled existential questions of what it means to be human and how we might come to terms and communicate with non-humans. It also questioned society as a whole and what effects rampant ecological damage and corporatisation might have on an already fractured and vulnerable humanity. There were undoubtedly attempts at imagining a world in which we had surpassed the limits and dangers of fossil fuel usage, of racism and sexism, of economic turmoil and political upheaval but many writers opted for the dystopic depictions of our collective future if the trends of the present were to continue. “Otherness”, another subject well known to our discipline was another focus of writers at this time. Much of what garnered widespread interest by sci-fi authors and audiences at this time have continued to be key areas of imaginary exploration to this day.

Sci-Fi, Popular Culture and the CSA

"This profusion of plants in popular culture, especially in sf, suggests at least an uneasy acknowledgment that plants have capabilities that we humans neither share nor yet fully comprehend"

– Bishop, Higgins & Määttä 2020, 2.

Engagement with sci-fi and popular culture in general was part of everyday life at Feirm Bheag as much as anywhere else. Sci-fi, in particular dystopian depictions of the present and near future were alluded to often during my time as Feirm Bheag. Discussions on sci-fi surfaced in the field primarily in relation to the perceived dire situation the world found itself in, i.e. global climate change, out-of-touch governments and wannabe autocratic megalomaniacs. From my perspective, the reasoning behind why sci-fi was mentioned was as a way to anchor some experience, be it informed by a personal feeling or a sense of communal feeling, to a cultural touchstone. In other words, sci-fi equips people with tools that can help make sense of aspects or happenings of the world that confound us. As Bishop, Higgins and Määttä state, "One of the greatest boons of sf is the way it allows us to confront that which is alien to us - worlds, thoughts, experiences, desires and lives that are not our own" (3, 2020). In the case of '1984' for example, Tina used the famous story as a way of conveying the unreality of her perception of the increasing levels of totalianarism arising throughout the world. 1984 was a commonly referred to story in relation to the current global political landscape due to the political awareness of my participants and while national and global politics had little effect on the CSA as an 'apolitical' entity, the effects were clearly felt by the people in the ways they saw themselves and their place in the world. Much of the talk around sci-fi was informed by world events. For the time that I was there, this talk centred around the heavily interlinked topics of politics, the economy, the environment, and, of course, the Pandemic. It was less so about the plants themselves.

There are many examples of sci-fi that features plants or agriculture in some shape but this was not the sort of sci-fi relayed to me by my participants. But that is not to say that ideas discussed in sci-fi did not surface. Two examples of sci-fi that contain themes discussed by participants would be Kim Stanley Robinson's "Aurora" and Jeff VanderMeer's "Annihilation". "Aurora" which centres on a colonial generation ship and considers humanity's true lack of control over non-humans through examples of failing crops, unforeseen bacterial mutation and extraterrestrial life. "Annihilation" is a prime example of imagining flora beyond what we recognise as living things. Area X, the otherworldly expanding dome of energy featured in "Annihilation" fundamentally alters all life within it, presenting such domain that defies our comprehension. People and plants combine in unsettling but fascinating ways

creating beings who inhabit a liminal space between the human and nonhuman. As Ivana, quoting Bishop (2020) puts it; 'when perceived in terms that are alien to human experience, plants in science fiction stand for alterity, for 'a domain that is strange, difficult to describe''' (2021,227). Both of these stories present domains that are strange, affording agency to nonhumans in ways that we do not in our daily real-world lives. While not specifically asked in relation to sci-fi pondering if the plants knew what was going on or if they had any awareness that they were plants would crop up from time to time at Feirm Bheag. It is in sci-fi stories such as the two mentioned here that enable us to explore these questions in all their wonder and to a certain extent horror because flora "in sf transforms our attitudes towards morality, politics, economics and cultural life at large, questioning and shifting many traditional parameters" (Bishop, Higgins & Määttä 2020,5).

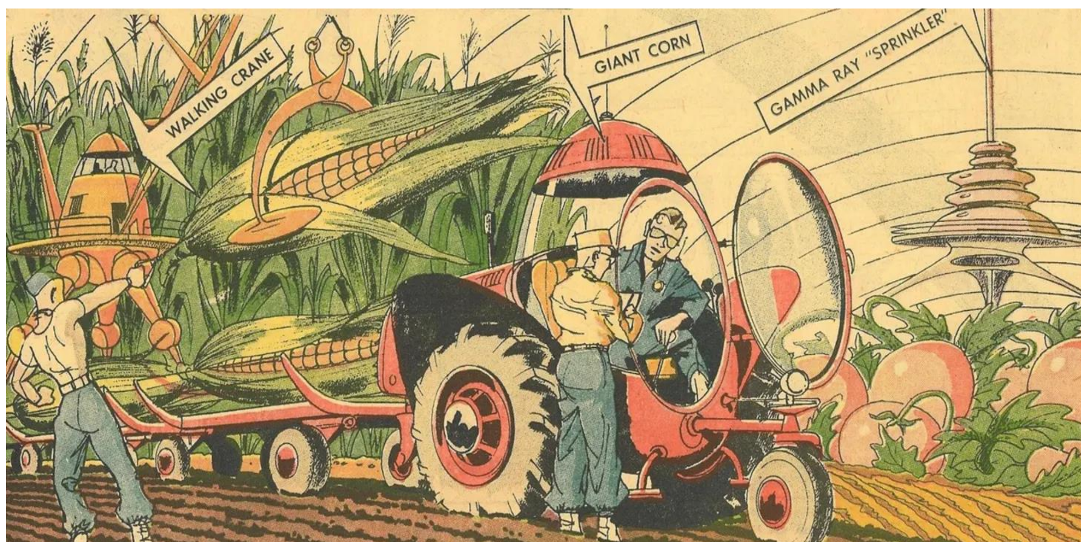

Fig.18: "Super-Sized Food of the Future", Arthur Radebaugh 1962

Wicked Futures

One of the more intriguing shifts over the last few decades is that of the role of the "unknown". Admittedly, that is a rather vague term in almost every sense of the word. I imagine the reader understands what I mean by the "unknown" in the current context but to remove any doubt unknown can refer to anything non-human, otherworldly, intangible or unpredictable. I contend that as we have traced sci-fi throughout the last two centuries, a shifting perspective on the unknown can also be traced. This trajectory shifts rather clearly from understanding the unknown as something to be pursued, to be conquered, in the early days of sci-fi to the unknown being something to be respected and feared. The unknown raises some interesting implications on how we collectively understand our past, present and

future. For I would like to culminate out discussion up to this point in this chapter with a single concept, that of the "Wicked Future". To understand better the role, or more specifically the complications, the imagination has on our conceptions of the future I turn to Richard Tutton's exploration of "wicked futures" (2017). Informed by the term "wicked problems" coined in a 1973 treatise written by Horst W.J. Rittel and Melvin M. Webber titled 'Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning', Tutton's exploration of the sociological, or more specifically STS, concept may prove useful in our discussion here. While not quite anthropology "wicked futures" proves a fascinating concept nonetheless. Before we consider wicked futures, a quick definition on Rittel and Webber's wicked problems provided by Tutton; 'the term wicked, with reference to character or action, also means actually or potentially harmful, destructive, disastrous, or pernicious; difficult or dangerous; and crucially… 'difficult to do something with'' (2017, 3). In other words, what can be categorised as wicked covers a vast array of phenomena. In respect to the wicked future(s), Tutton argues that it can be understood by considering how 'the future is enacted through material-discursive practices' (2017, 3). Something that was discussed in the last chapter and to some extent in the above sections is the theme of expectation. The sociology of expectation, a field in its own right, has since the 1960s shown that acting to bring about a future and the representation of the future are not separate acts, instead both are intimately connected. Expectation is the result of thinking about, speaking about, and acting toward a particular imagined future. The discussion of this chapter thus far has firmly resided in the words of expectation, 'words that do things' (2017, 7). Tutton mentions two types of future in his essay firstly, "present futures", the 'words, statements, images, visions or expectations of the future that are made and circulate in the present' (2017, 8). And secondly, "latent futures", these futures are 'real but have not yet fully developed and become manifest and are still in process' (2017, 9). He gives the example of global warming as a latent future and while not explicit in giving an example of a present future I would argue that almost all present futures are latent futures if we take the definition of the latter to mean a future in process. But for Tutton while expectations is an important facet of understanding the future they are not the entire answer. For to fully understand the future one must take into account the materiality of the future, hence his argument for "material-discursive" practices. This is something that has been apparent in our discussions thus far; while my primary interest is in the role that the imagination plays in visions of the future(s), one's thoughts and words cannot be taken in isolation. The material world is not the only important thing but it still plays a crucial role in our constructions of the future.

The problems with expectation and visions of the future thus present themselves. The future is "wicked" because it is almost impossible to predict with any significant level of confidence, the future is difficult to do something with. Granted there are exceptions to this whether based on some form of clairvoyance or luck, there are scenarios where imagined future becomes easier to make real. Generally, however, the consequences of an individual's or group's thoughts, words and actions, in tandem with the

materiality of the world, are not easily predictable. The preceding chapters took us through how the people of Feirm Bheag have attempted to enact a latent future, one that has not quite coalesced but is in the process and so is only partially "visible". This chapter has thus far taken a cursory look at the thoughts and words of expectation found in popular discourse through sci-fi but also with trends and the practice of futurology. And throughout we see that the future is not easily pieced together. There are too many variables, the material world does not always bend to the whims of the human mind, and the futures we attempt to enact are loaded with expectations to the point that the results of which become utterly unpredictable. 'We struggle to anticipate or fully know the future consequences of our actions or those of others. We might act with the best of intentions, but our best intentions can produce unintended consequences, unforeseen effects, and unanticipated events can stall, or end prematurely our dreams. Moreover, the timescale over which futures unfold adds a further complication since what might appear relatively benign over a fifty or hundred year duration, might become far more pernicious over a much longer time' (Tutton 2017,12). Taking this quote, we can apply it directly to one of the largest "wicked" problem of our time; global climate change. Attempting to solve this problem in any way is at the heart of Feirm Bheag, even if it is not the primary motivation for its growing membership as we saw in chapter 2. But it is not a problem easily solved, let alone understood. On an individual level, or small group level, both of which operate within Feirm Bheag, the challenge of climate change often felt insurmountable. In a candid conversation with Avery this struggle between "wanting to do what's right" and the realisation of the enormity of the problem was clearly illustrated; *'I'm still gonna do what I can as an individual…I just I really don't see it happening (making a difference). Yeah, that's really pessimistic that is, however, that does not mean I'm not going to put the effort into whatever I can do'*. While the impenetrability of climate change here, as both a present and latent future, is cause for concern for Avery, it also spurs action. The expectations of the future here are themselves difficult to formulate due to the sheer unknowable-ness, yet Avery still takes action that he *hopes* will bring some sort of favourable outcome. The COVID-19 pandemic also offers another example of a wicked future, manifesting as both present and latent. For the same reasons as climate change, the pandemic is present because it has all but consumed the words, images and expectations of the present and latent because there is no definitive end in sight. As Mia succinctly put it in a text just after the imposition of the first national lockdown; *'It's quite a surreal time'*. Surreal it certainly was. In a time before we had become accustomed to the idea, the beginning of the first lockdown was a true manifestation of the wicked future that was the pandemic. Due to the mysterious and rapidly moving parts of the invisible virus, we did not know, nor could we know, how this pandemic would unfold. What is more interesting is that the virus itself is the embodiment of a wicked future for its effects were unknowable until they were upon us.

No matter the medium through which a prediction is made or an expectation is held, be it highly speculative science fiction or well research driven forecast or guessing what a prey's next move might be, the future is to a large extent unknowable. One's imagination can fill in many of the gaps but even this can only go so far. And so for better or worse be it a present future, a near future, or a latent future (although I contend there is little difference) nothing is set in stone. It is true that nothing is set in stone and so these gaps that our minds fill in, that any living mind can fill in, are as Kohn puts it "guesses" that 're-present a possible future, and through this mediation they bring the future to bear on the present. The future's influence on the present has its own kind of reality' (2013, 207). Remembering of course that these "guesses" are signs for which Kohn using Pierce's definition, states are relational processes. If signs, as Kohn argues, are alive, the future is then itself alive as a result of being interpreted by a self. Be it human or otherwise.

Hope

Fig.19: "Farmer, in your hands lies the future!"

– Pfeiffer 1983[1938], 186

Regardless of how knowable or unknowable the future is, expectations generally come in two varieties, dread (fear) and hope. An oversimplification perhaps but one that will suit our purposes here. We will focus our attention on the latter but first the reader might be wondering what any of the last few pages

have to do with urban community farming. And so, returning to the roots of this chapter I would like to draw your attention to a particular type of sci-fi which is prominent in the popular imagination today, apocalyptic sci-fi. The particular sub-genre of apocalyptic sci-fi has a firm grip on popular media, and while apocalyptic sci-fi does include world ending action packed third world wars or alien invasions, the forms that we are interested are a little more subtle but just as devastating. The already mentioned resurging popularity of Orwell's "1984", an apocalyptic depiction of a near-future dystopia, is but one example. During the easing of the coronavirus lockdown, when I was finally able to return to my field site to carry out some additional firework, I had a brief but interesting conversation with Tina in which she compared the ease and relative swiftness at which the lockdown was implemented in Ireland to her recent reading of 'Brave New World' (1932). To, in some ways, counteract these apocalyptic visions, there is the imagined future of the past. The rose-tinted idealisation of a time before technocratic global capitalism catapulted into the future-past. Parallels can be drawn here again to Benjamin's (1969) "jetztzeit", a "tiger's leap" into the past, Feirm Bheag in some ways presents, and sees, itself as the 'French Revolution viewed itself as Rome incarnate' (1969, 261) although without the need for beheadings. The imagined future-past is a symbol of hope for Mia and many of the volunteers and members such as Tina. While arguably an unachievable reality for a myriad of reasons, the vision of a future that is closer to an idealised agrarian past is an appealing one. This would become apparent through remarks over the lack of industrial processes on the farm, the employment of organic methods and the small-scale nature of the CSA. There is promise of utopia in these things, a real feeling of possible alternative worlds, of hope. Apocalyptic visions and idyllic agrarian futures were both hallmarks of many of the conversations I had over the months of fieldwork. Both go hand in hand with the concepts playing off each other, on the one hand striving toward the agrarian utopia while on the other moving closer toward from the impending doom of global climate change and neoliberal capitalism.

There are numerous definitions of hope but I find the combination of two definitions, that of Fox's (2015) 'hope as a human faculty or a sense of openness to the world…built on the trust that there is a life worth living in uncertain times' (2015, 172), and that of Lane's (2018), 'Hope keeps thought and action open and reacts against claims to absolute knowledge. Hope is a deep impulse that resists closure and refuses finality' (2018, 171), do well to encompass what it is to hope. There is much overlap between these two definitions particular the idea of openness. For our purposes here, hope can be defined as a sense of openness within a person which allows for the imagining of alternatives to present conditions. One's sense of hope may manifest in the present moment but it is something informed by one's imagination. The visions of the future past, the alternative world where as a species we live in harmony with the non-human kingdoms, are visions fuelled the fear of the human world unravelling at the seams, but they are just a much fuelled by hope. Hope as a concept and as a lived part of people's

lives plays a huge role in the aspirational goals of projects like Feirm Bheag. With hope, and aspiration, comes the motivation to make a change to one's life or community. Without it, it is difficult to see how such projects would ever get off the ground. Of course, alternative future making projects like the CSA are hope generating as well, they feed off but also produce the feeling. In chapter 4 I covered how the farm itself had certain transformative, time altering, powers. These come into sharper focus when we look at the generative abilities of the farm to create imagined worlds in the minds of my participants. As I said, the simple acts of being present at the farm, planting seedlings or harvesting plants all contain the potential creative power of alterity, and by extension of hope. The process of planting, cultivating, harvesting and eating, the sensations of one's hands in the dirt, or of eating foods only pulled from the ground, enable these creative potentials. Hope is one of those things that is difficult to pin down in terms of analysis and yet is counted among the most powerful emotions, with hope people feel empowered, without it, powerless.

> '*It's really, really important to have hope for that farm, and for these types of farms, because I think they're really, really crucial. I think maybe if there's more participation, and more from the community, and more connection between people, and more openness between people. I think most people have grown up not in the community, like you can say this town is a community, but like, who actually feels like they're part of a community. Like I'd say it's a very small amount of people in the thousands and thousands and thousands of people that live here. I don't think a lot of like suburban and city kind of people actually understand what community means and including myself…and because of climate change is such a big topic as well, if people can understand how they're helping with climate change through this farm, then maybe that would also be, you know, so I have a lot of hope because I'm kind of like, well, this can last if people just invest in us. And I think you know, if people believe in it, and give it love and give each other love, it can work, because the old way is not gonna work. I don't know, but boy, I hope.*'
>
> – *Amy*

Hope is reliant on the collective imagination. While hope does manifest within the individual, as the excerpt from a conversation with Amy eludes to, without a collective or community, it is not something that can withstand the constant barrage of the linear monotonous present. Through what Lane (2018) calls "contrast-experiences" these are the experiences in one's life that starkly point out the difference between "what is and what could be", hope can spread. Contrast-experiences put the present reality, which for many may feel fixed and unchangeable, into direct opposition to the imagination but in such a way that the end result has the potential to spur on an imagined alternative. As Lane puts it 'imagination is the enemy of absolutes, especially the absolutes of history, politics and religion, that

can paralyse us in the present' (2018, 173). I contend that when collective "contrast-experiences" occur, such as that of the 2007/2008 economic downturn, it has the potential to supercharge the collective imagination, thus creating alternatives and in turn generating hope. I speak of hope here as though it is something quantifiable and this is misleading as I do not believe one can quantify something as ethereal as hope, but what I believe can be said with confidence is that through the above mechanism the capacity for hope is increased, or as Fox (2015) might put it the "sense of openness" is felt by more. Let us looks at the example of the 2007/2008 "Crash" and its subsequent years as an example of what I am talking about.

The Crash and Hopeful Aftermath

It is difficult to write about any phenomenon in Ireland these days without mentioning the economic collapse of 2007-2008. The financial crisis and subsequent years of austerity had a profound impact on Irish society, the effects of which we continue to live with 13 years later. The Crash was in essence apocalyptic for many. It took their jobs, their homes and in some cases, their lives. When asking my participants why they decided to get involved with their respective project, this includes Feirm Bheag but also interviewees from other projects in Ireland, one of the most common answers was related to the 2007/08 crash. Either because of job loss or a general re-evaluating of one's life, the Crash forced many to think about alternatives to the ways they lived. The re-evaluation of one's life is a hallmark of crisis. The sudden dramatic change in the circumstances of one's life brought on by economic recession, war or pandemic can act as a catalyst leading to a fundamental questioning of how one is living. While rarely willing participants in this re-evaluation it was seen in the long run as a possible turn of events. Charles from the Geo-Dome project in the centre of Dublin City explained that before the Crash he was an entertainment journalist producing articles for a number of print music magazines. The mid-2000s saw the advent of the electronic or e-magazine which soon began to bleed physical magazines of readership. Charles remarked on this but concluded that the death knell for his journalism career was the Crash that wiped out many of the magazines he had once written for. After spending months figuring out what to do with his life he stumbled across the idea of created geodesic dome greenhouses. These greenhouses would serve not only as indoor growing stations, through the use of hydroponic bays and ultraviolet light but would also be large enough to host events for the local community they would be situated in. When I met Charles he had been working on this project for a number of years and had already two built and operational domes under his belt. He was working on his third, and most complex, dome on the grounds of a university when I contacted him. This dome would have extra features such as a small coffee stand that would operate as a way of self-funding the dome's development. The project had somewhat stalled with Charles awaiting funding from an Irish

government initiative designed to fund small community focused eco-friendly projects. While others would talk about the Crash and the aftermath Charles was certainly the most upfront and comprehensive about his experiences. And while I cannot be sure as to whether Charles was simply telling himself that things were better because of the events of 2007/2008, he genuinely came across as though he believed they were. But as he told me it had been a long road to get to that point. Charles' life reflects the wider Irish context in which it has been observed that "while the motivations behind those participating in UA are reflective of the immediate material conditions of crisis (e.g. unemployment), they are also indicative of more deep-seated desires to re-calibrate values and lifestyles in the post-crash period" (Corcoran, Kettle & O'Callaghan 2017, 309).

The Crash had a similar effect on some of those who volunteered regularly at Feirm Bheag during my time there. They, who would have been in their late teens or early twenties, saw their world simply fall apart. What had once seemed like a time of endless prosperity and or unlimited opportunity evaporated before them just as they were completing their university degrees or entering the job market. A sense of scepticism of the mainstream neoliberal market driven economy was palpable from them. Even those who had managed to secure a job during the worst of the economic collapse were wary of the whole system in general. For one reason or another the Crash had altered their values. One could argue they may have been harbouring these feelings regardless and they would be making a fair point, but it would be naïve to ignore the lasting impact the Crash had. While the Crash took much away from people and set the stage for years of economic austerity, it created an impetus for change, firing the furnaces of imagination. At least this can be said for the case of Feirm Bheag. While the CSA itself was not a direct product of the Crash's aftermath, like that of Charles' Geo-Dome, it, along with the proceeding years, was credited as being responsible for the altering of people's mindsets toward the "dominant thinking" (Fox, 2015) of the neoliberal Celtic Tiger. While it was not always referenced directly, a number of research participants mentioned feelings of disconnected and disillusionment with the ways things had turn out, not for them necessarily but for a more general collective "people".

An Alternate Utopia

In this section on Hope I have specifically avoided mention of the term "utopia", because, as mentioned earlier in this chapter it is a laden term. And while the term utopia or any of its derivatives such as ecotopia are usually treated with a significant level of suspicion in anthropology, Lockyer and Veteto (2015) suggest we reconsider this. 'Utopia is often associated either with naïve idealism or with hegemonic meta-projects such as nationalism, state-based socialism, and global neoliberalism.

However, it could also be argued that utopian striving for a better world is a fundamentally human condition and that anthropology would be remiss not to engage with it' (2015,20). In other words, regardless on our discipline's historical approaches toward utopian ideals or the potential ulterior motives that utopia projects might have we should perhaps engage with utopic visions meaningfully as matters of human experience. The hopeful future visions of the Feirm Bheag CSA are essentially visions of ecotopia. Ecotopias are fundamentally visions of hope. Ecotopias, in all their variety, are one such utopic vision which is the primary concern of Lockyer and Veteto and their collection "Environmental Anthropology Engaging Ecotopia". An ecotopia, for the uninitiated, is as the name would suggest, an ecological utopia, one that is primarily concerned with issues of environmental sustainability. For them, an ecotopia is 'the good state that we must strive for but may not actually exist except in theory' (2015, 1). An ecotopia also has particular temporal characteristics, to be in tune with the ecology, environment, Nature, whatever term you wish to use, relies on a particular cycle of events, in the realm of agriculture at least. The other side of the linear capitalism in the bi-temporality of the previous chapter, the life-world of Feirm Bheag, is that of a striving ecotopia. I will rest this particular point here.

Life after Death

If I am to be perfectly honest this final part of the chapter is an indulgence in some respects. But there are of course connections to our discussion thus far. I would like to use this very last paragraph to bring some awareness to the philosophy of Cosmism before we move on to the final chapter of our journey. I have left this for last as I am not myself convinced of the efficacy of raising this next point in regards to our current conversation on popular hopelessness and hope. I will, however, raise it as at the very least it will enlighten us of a vision for the future, a vision of utopia, that originates from outside of our Western-centric imaginaries of which we have been bogged down in thus far, and it may also just pique the interest of the reader. For many years, long before I began my PhD research I had a fascination with the para-scientific, and borderline occult – the world of Russian Cosmism. Russian Cosmism is not something many of us in the West are familiar with, this is most likely a result of the fact that there was distinct lack of English translations of the works foundational to the movement, with many texts only receiving a translation as late as 2018[18]. It is generally agreed upon that the Cosmist movement was established by a pre-Soviet librarian named Nikolai Fyodorvich Fedorov, born in 1829 and died in 1903. In a Russia before the time of Soviet revolution Fedorov pursued a philosophy considered heretical by the Orthodox Church, of which he was a devout member. His works were compiled after

[18] Russian Cosmism, 2018. Boris Groys, ed.

his death and published posthumously in 1906 under the title “Philosophy of the Common Task”. Fedorov wrote about many topics but his primary fascination was that of death or how to overcome it to be more precise. He was troubled by what he believed to be a lack of compassion in the world and sought to fix this through the abolishment of death. Through the use of art, science, and technology, Fedorov was convinced that humanity could create the “Kingdom of Heaven” on Earth and in doing so reconnect humans, both living and dead, to each other and unite humanity with the wider cosmos. For Fedorov, death was a problem to be solved and while humanity has yet to colonise the galaxy and overcome death, much of Cosmism’s underlying philosophy seeped into Soviet life particularly in Roscosmos the Soviet, now Russian Federation, space agency but also throughout the realms of art, technology, and politics. Notable readers of Cosmism included Tolstoy and Dostoevsky among others. Cosmism would be driven underground after Stalin jailed and executed many of the movement’s adherents in the 1930s. It is difficult to follow the development of Cosmism from the 1930s to the collapse of the Soviet Union but since the bloc’s implosion Cosmism has seen something of a resurgence across Russia with its ideas beginning to spread West. Cosmism, at its core, is a philosophy of hope. Hope that one day we will understand our place in the universe, that we will know the unknown and all those that have died will be returned to us. Through the use of technology and science but also just as importantly through art and spirituality, Cosmism promises a future utopian vision. It might be worth noting here that for a Runa from Ávila this conception of death would likely make little sense. While arguably not as finite as Western “naturalist” conceptions of death, Cosmist death is much more a “reversal” than a continuation of life as it would be for the Runa. Yet, in its own way, Cosmist reincarnation is a continuation, it is the rattling of sabres against death. The movement, harking back to Lane’s definition of hope, vehemently ‘refuses finality’ (2018, 171). It proposes an infinity, beyond the human, in which people themselves come into concert with the universe. In some ways this is what Feirm Bheag may very well have the potential to do. Not bring back the dead but create deeper connections with the cosmos through a temporal life-world that rejects linearity, instead proposing a radical non-linear “now-time”. It is in the next and final chapter “Beyond the Human & Imagining Alterity” that we will see what these connections with what lies beyond the human might entail.

Autumn

Chapter VI: Beyond the Human & Imagining Alterity

'What we share with jaguars and other living selves – whether bacterial, floral, fungal, or animal – is the fact that how we represent the world around us is in some way or another constitutive of our being.'

– Kohn 2013,6

Now it is time to give the stage to the nonhumans of Feirm Bheag. To begin let us look to the grown which we stood upon while going about our day. The soil in the area is described as having 'fine loamy drift with limestones' by the EPA's Soil Information System (SIS). Loamy soils are known to be muddy and sticky in wet weather but are quick to dry out and crack when entering summer months. This was my experience of the soil at Feirm Bheag. Drainage and lack of naturally occurring nutrients in the soil were major problems. All things considered, the soil at the farm was not ideal for growing at any sort of scale beyond casual gardening. Yet, many things grew. This is partly due to the attempts to improve the soil by methods of rotavating and introduction of nitrogen. Evidenced by the variety of plants that grew on the farm, these attempts did work to some extent. The soil profile was also taken into account when choosing what plants to grow. For instance, the Jerusalem artichoke proved very successful thanks to its incredible hardiness. On the flipside, we never grew potatoes as they would have never survived to fruit or even if they did the amount they would produce would be minuscule. The plants that were deliberately grown on the farm numbered in the dozens in both vegetable/fruit type and in variety over the course of my research. Here is a non-exhaustive list: curly kale, red Russian kale, rainbow chard, spinach, lettuce, cabbage, carrots, leeks, suede, tomatoes of over a dozen varieties, red and white onions, Jerusalem artichokes, French beans, green beans, cucumbers, strawberries, blueberries, chillies, parsnips, radishes, white and purple kohlrabi, but as just mentioned not potatoes. Some of the plants mentioned here were annual staples of the farm, such as the leeks, onions and lettuce. Others such as the chillies were more experimental introductions. In the case of the chillies they were kept exclusively in the seedling polytunnel where they would get the benefit of the warmer climate and could be tended to. Each type of plant had its own eccentricities but the general rule at the farm was rid the beds of weeds, water the plants regularly and then leave them alone to do what they did best: grow.

Fig.20: A Confused Ladybird

There were also some animals introduced. These include pigs and chickens, but this was before my time. They only thing left of their legacy was a menu stuck on the inside wall of the container which described a rather upmarket 3 course meal. During my research stint, a hive of bees was introduced to the farm. The humans of the farm didn't interact with the beehive as it wasn't intended that it would produce honey. The hive was only ever checked on to assess the health of the hive and ensure the box they lived in was in one piece. While they did not live on the farm, Mia and Kerry kept a number of hens at their home whom produced enough eggs that a number of 6-egg boxes were sold separate to the members' shares on Harvest Day. Apart from the human-imported animals, Feirm Bheag was home to a range of creatures. The robin, or potentially robins, who was aptly named Ruby was amongst the most popular. This robin was curious and largely unafraid of humans, two qualities which made Ruby a mascot of sorts. He would regularly be found in the vicinity of where we took our breaks when the weather was fair, usually hiding underneath one of the colourfully painted chairs made from wooden pallets. None of the other animals we shared the space with had names insofar as I know. A number of different bird species would frequent the farm, from blackbirds, wood pigeons, crows, starlings and the occasional hawk. On terra firma, it was not unusual to see small animals such as rabbits and squirrels or the traces of foxes. Of these, the rabbits elicited the most ire from the human occupants of the space. They were not dissuaded by the fencing surrounding the farm or plastic sheeting covering younger plants in their pursuit of an early morning or evening snack when there were no humans around. The largest group of animals that called the space home, and that I had the most contact with, were the insects and arachnids. As mentioned already there was a contingent of human-imported bees but there were also local bees that would frequent both the wild and domesticated flowering plants. Setting the bees aside and acknowledging the unseen species I encountered there were four main types of creature.

Those most etched into my memory are the arachnids who had a habit of hiding on the underside of large leafed plants. Guaranteed to give you a fright when you went to harvest the plant. There is a discourse in Ireland that spiders are getting bigger and while it is nothing more than anecdotal some of the spiders at the farm would appear to confirm this suspicion. I was greeted by spiders of considerable size with large black bulbous abdomens skittering away from the underside of a kohlrabi. There were other species of spider but these were generally smaller and not as threatening to look at. Slugs were by far the most common insect, one species in particular was addicted to the root portion of lettuce, cabbage, swede and turnip. A perfectly healthy looking plant when harvested would be crawling with the slugs who had made short work of the plant's underbelly. To speak truthfully, we had very little regard for these slugs and I imagine many did not survive the encounter with the human who uncovered them. The more permissible plant dwellers were the seasonal caterpillars. Colourful and rather cute, the caterpillars on the farm were particularly fond of the leaves on the Cavolo Nero plant otherwise known as Lacinato kale. I have a suspicion that Mia didn't approve but if I was put on harvesting kale I would purposely ignore the leaves which were hosting the caterpillars. As a result there may have been a few less leaves in members' shares but the caterpillars had nothing short of a feast. As is to be expected we also had a fair share of butterflies who would lazily flutter across the farm. There were a number of other insects particularly a number of beetles and flying bugs such as common house flies and wasps.

Just as with the animals that shared the farm, there were also plants that had a different types of relationships with the humans. There were the 'domesticated' plants as mentioned above but there were 'un-domesticated' plants too. Many of these were assigned to the catch-all term of weeds. Undesirable plants, many of the dandelions, grasses and cat's ears were mercilessly ripped from the ground if they dared to breach the plots designated for the productive plants put there by humans. These weeds were welcome to grow in the unused parts of land and the grasses in particular made quick work of colonising the plots undergoing a rest period from actively growing produce.

It is generally agreed that non-human mammals, at the very least, are conscious. This is not a human consciousness but it is a consciousness of sort if we liberate the definition from and anthropocentric grasp. Once we move away from the mammalian branches of the evolutionary tree what is considered to have consciousness is less clear especially the further from the animal kingdom one goes. If there is a whole array of non-human consciousness, much of it is completely alien to us. Many of the forms it would take would be consciousness not as we know it. Meeker and Szabari state that plants 'often fail to confirm the desires and attributes we project onto them. Plants are undeniably lively and animate - they move, nourish themselves, reproduce, engage in marvously complex chemical signalling, sense, relate to an external world, and even, as some claim, display intelligence - yet they cannot be said to

possess a point of view or a consciousness that we recognise and recognises us in return' (2020 , 9). It is even worth questioning what is meant by consciousness in this context as it is a term fully loaded.

Fig.21: Breakfast with the Caterpillars

As life on Earth we are all related in some manner and are governed by similar fundamental mechanisms. If we take a view that life consists of all things that have the common basic mechanisms such as respiration, sensitivity and growth, then the lines between the human and non-human are effectively non-existent. There is a level of reductionism involved here but the fundamental viewpoint that we, human and non-human alike, are all collections of cells that together form complex systems is not one to be scoffed at as it hints at the deep connections the human and non-human have. There are those who believe that by simply being alive warrants moral considerations for plant consciousness, this view termed "Enactivism" (Thompson, 2007), that a being that is alive will by virtue have some level of consciousness or have a mind. I am first going to focus on two aspects of what biology states as two of the requirements for something to be considered alive, sensitivity and growth. Sensitivity is a living thing's ability to sense the world around it and respond to stimuli in the environment. This is achieved through a living thing's sense receptors and sense organs. These sense organs vary from one living thing to another but almost all of them correspond to sight, hearing, taste, smell, or touch. The ways in which these senses are interpreted and reacted to by a living thing are countless with many non-humans having adaptations specific to individual species. It is also worth noting that the phenomena we classify as senses are anthropocentric as some animals possess others such as the use of electromagnetism. If we look to plants specifically there are an additional two senses we can add, that

light and gravity. Humans are also able to sense light and gravity but the responses to both that plants have are unique to them. Gravity is that invisible force that is responsible for keeping the universe together. It also allows plants to know which way to send their shoots (up) and their roots (down). This perception of gravity, known as gravitropism, is essential for plant life. When a plant knows which way to grow its shoots it can develop leaves to collect light. Light is the fuel for the plant's nutrient producing engine. This leads us to the second aspect of life that I would like to lay out; growth. Growth can mean a number of things as we covered in chapter 4. In biology it generally refers to the physical growth of a being but if we broaden out the term we can apply it to the mental and spiritual aspects of human experience. There is another sense, however, that is the central crux of the entire debate over whether plants are or at least have the capacity for consciousness. That sense is pain. If we are to be accurate the sense is itself not pain as pain is the feeling elicited. The sense is nociception, the 'unconscious signal that alerts the organism that body tissue might be threatened' (Michel 2018, 2142). Nociception is distinct from pain as pain is a 'conscious mental state' (2018, 2142). Something that we do not consider conscious, that does not possess consciousness, can still have the ability to respond to harmful actors or sensations. And it is in this distinction, of feeling versus nociception that much of the debate over plant and other non-human consciousness currently resides. There is no agreed upon test for telling if a being from the viewpoint of an outside observer is experiencing pain or is simply exhibiting behaviour that resembles pain but is nothing more than nociception. The qualifiers for discerning pain from nociception vary greatly, some of which are firmly rooted in empirical data and others take leaps of philosophical faith. It is worth noting that these are anthropocentric qualifiers but as there is a vast lacuna between our knowledge of our experiences and those of beings not like us, it is all we really have to go off. While I am giving this disclaimer I'll add another, I used the term "plant" broadly here, much like how I use "human". There are thousands of species all with their individual quirks and specialisations with radically different responses to their environments just like the animal kingdom from which we hail.

Consciousness and intelligence have been central themes of both classical and contemporary metaphysics, however, for much of metaphysics' history the pursuit of knowledge on the subjects has focused manifestations within humans. Descartes' infamous "*cogito ergo sum*" being one of the most succinct attempts at understanding what it means to think and to exist. Descartes was doubtful of most things in his life but the one thing Descartes could be sure of was that because he could doubt his own reality, he must exist[19]. Descartes spawned the Rationalist movement, the belief that (human) reason is the source of knowledge, this being in contrast to Empiricism's belief that knowledge is chiefly attained through the senses and experience. Rationalism has a multitude of implications for language with

[19] I would be curious to see what René would make of contemporary simulation theory.

innatism, or “innate ideas”, being one of the most consequential for anthropology and linguistics. While Rationalism offered a revolutionary development of European philosophy, culminating in the Enlightenment, it raises problems for investigating non-human thought or feeling particular due to its emphasis on human exceptionalism. Enter the questionable character of Heidegger. I choose Heidegger here as he is one of the few philosophers that attempted to account for internal mind and external world and concluded that there fundamentally exists no subjective or objective, rejecting Cartesian logic. For this reason it makes Heidegger a worthwhile inclusion. Tepley (2014) points out that according Heidegger writings there exists different kinds of entities which have different kinds of beings. While there are numerous “beings”, three make up the majority of the discussion; “care” (Soge), “readiness-to-hand” (Zuhandenheit), and “presence-at-hand” (Vorhandenheit). According to Tepley ‘a typical view is that care is possessed by human beings (Daesin), readiness-at-hand by artifacts (e.g. tools), and presence-at-hand by material things (2014, 462). None of these types of beings specifically relate to non-human living beings but Heidegger makes the addition of the “leben” or “life”, a type of being possessed by all living things. I am not saying here that Heidegger was intentionally attempting to construct a non-human “being-in-the-world”, his “Dasein” or human is unique from everything else in terms of its being. In fact, being is conditional on Dasein, this goes for any type of being including that of nature itself (Carmen 2003). But his concept of being and that of leben can still contribute to a non-human understanding through his thoughts on “intentionality”. ‘Heidegger is not interested in the conditions of intentionality generally, but in the practical conditions of our interpretation of intentional attitudes, our own or those of animals, as intentional’ (Carmen 2003, 126). For Heidegger through his example is of a lizard, claimed non-humans are not capable of the intentionality that Dasein is capable of. According to Carmen, using the term “world-poverty”, ‘understood as mere behaivoral access to things in an environment, absent any understanding of being’ (2003, 50). Heidegger argues that a lizard who suns itself on a rock does not know what a “rock” is, nor that is exists. ‘For the very word, just by being a word in a human language, already smuggles in too much of our own understanding of being to capture a particular poverty of the lizard’s apprehension of the entity’ (2003,50). And so, while animals and by extension possibly other non-humans do have some level of intentionality, they lack any understanding of “being”. To potentially counter the discussion immediately above Meeker and Szabari argue that, and to reiterate the attempt to detach from anthropocentric conceptions, ‘discussions of plant intelligence are once again symptomatic of the challenge that plants represent to anthropocentric notions of life; they also show clearly how this challenge functions as a spur to speculation’ (2020, 10)

Function

'It's really a lot of work to keep even a small amount of space under control because actually you're not working with nature. You're working against nature by feeding yourself. You know, really you have to bend nature [and] nature wants to just push up those weeds and grow trees.'

– Elsie

"Functioning ecology" is a term that one will likely come across in any exploration of CSAs, teikei or bio-dynamics. Sometimes it is explicitly referred to as such other times it is not. If one was to read the writings of ecologists, one would quickly notice that the term 'function' or 'functioning' can have multiple meanings. For our purposes we will be applying "function" in the sense of an analysis of holistic functioning. In other words and as alluded to above an analysis of the functioning of an ecology, or CSA farm, as a whole structure instead of an analysis of disparate parts. Jax (2005) offers a succinct description of 4 interpretations of "function": 'functions as processes, the function(ing) of a system, functions as roles, and functions as services' (2005, 642). There are two types of functionality that we are most interested in, are commonly referred to as "functions as roles" and "functions as services". These are the forms of functionality that we will look at in particular, of course, with some anthropological flair. While the four interpretations of functions mentioned above are useful in different contexts, I want to focus on these two for particular reasons. Firstly, "functions as roles", is useful in our analysis because it treats the objects or actors in an ecology or environment as more than just the recipients of processes. Instead, 'in focusing on the relation between parts and wholes, the status of the objects themselves changes. They are not mere "protagonist" of processes…they have become bearers of functions" (Jax 2005, 642). In other words, analysing through this lens allows us to examine the single or multiple roles particular objects or organisms (including humans) can play, be they producer, consumer or something else. Secondly, "functions as services" may prove useful as in the analytical framework humans are consciously included as objects/actors within an environment. "Functions as services" is a tool specifically used to examine the "practical use" of a non-human (alive or not) object. 'The word "function" here in fact denotes a particular "service" of the system for human beings' says Jax (2005,642), but he is quick to add that 'such "services" can likewise be described as relating to other living beings' (2005,642). These two "functions" as analytical frameworks interlock well with Weston's animacies and so combining these two theories could proof fruitful as well look at the relationship between human and non-human at the CSA. In essence, is a treatment of the human non-human relationship at Feirm Beag as an assemblage? If we take a definition of assemblage direct from Deleuze and Guattari one such definition we get is the following: 'expression in it [assemblage] becomes a "semiotic system", a regime of signs, and content becomes a pragmatic system, actions and

passions' (1987, 504). This definition does not strictly explain what an assemblage actually is, according to Deleuze and Guattari a number of things can constitute an assemblage, almost anything in fact. What this definition does do, however, is explain what is involved in an assemblage. "Expression" and "content". "Expression" has a clear connotation, it represents semiotic systems within assemblages. Treating the living actors, both human and non-human, within the assemblage of Feirm Beag as semiotic beings is something we have already discussed. "Content" within an assemblage refers to the actions taken by actors, this aligning with the ecological function of roles as outline above. We can, of course, take a more simplified understanding of an assemblage and apply it to Feirm Beag. Take for example 'assemblage theory focuses on complex constellations of objects, bodies, expressions, and territories that come together in a productive and/or innovative argument' (Livesey 2011, 271). Ultimately the most important facets of an assemblage is the relationality of the elements within the assemblage and their contingency. By favouring relationality and contingency as core to what makes an assemblage I am treading the line between what I believe Deleuze and Guattari originally envisioned and more contemporary anthropological thought on the matter (Collier & Ong, 2004). Assemblages do not mean the same thing to every theorist so I am following in this particular tradition. I do not intend to tease out an assemblage map here of the human and non-human actors present at the CSA, as I have done so in a sense over the course of this essay. I mention it here explicitly in hopes that I have illustrated why this is important. An excellently succinct example of an assemblage that is similar to Feirm Beag is provided by Livesey; a garden. Gardens 'bring together a wide range of forces and materials – soil, water, climate, nutrients, organisms, specialities, structures – under the care of the gardener' (2011, 272). Insert farmer in the place of the gardener and a similar assemblage forms.

Animacy

> '*Feeling the texture of the soil, there's like something about that, the fresh air, the fresh smells from these plants is like really calming and really relaxing. Like there's obviously a scientific thing behind that and I'm sure you know what I mean. But, it's like there's also like a spiritual side to it too. It's like very, very connecting.*'
>
> *- Amy*

An important facet of the bio-dynamic movement is the spiritual element but spirituality in one form or another is not unique to the bio-dynamicists. It is, I believe, an integral part to many alternative agricultural movements, Feirm Beag CSA included. The form these spiritualities take varies but there are commonalities and taking a neo-animistic approach may enlighten our understanding of them. Neo-

animism, or animacy, is something that I have touched on throughout this thesis, if not with direct reference to it. Animacy has had something of a revival in anthropology in recent years. No longer relegated to the fringes of environmental anthropology, animacy has much to offer an analysis of human relationships and non-humans in arguable any setting. Weston (2017) very early on in her book points out that animacy is not the animism of old, with there being more between the two than a simple name change. For Weston the animism of old in a broad sense was concerned with the debate on whether non-human and objects traditionally considered as inanimate are similar to us in our consciousness or whether they contemplate their own existences. The multiple animacies of new presented by Weston are not so much interested in finding the answers to these questions but are instead more concerned with "the conviction that animacy renders trees and humans and rocks and cows inseparable, a vast assemblage[20] of sorts, not only in the sense that each acts upon the others in ways that may or may not be deliberate but also in the sense that each takes up something lively from the others that contributes to its very form" (2017, 4). While according to Weston there is still much debate within the field of animacy to define what 'life' is exactly and in what emphasis the area should be studied, the common thread is an "intimate, emergent, mutually constitutive vision of a world infused with life" (2017, 5). While I find Weston's arguments intriguing, we do differ in our approach to animacy somewhat. Weston points out that accounts of animacy recently published have focused on two, while most certainly connected, different approaches. The first being that of the de-centring of the human, or a post-human approach, the other which "studies animating and reanimating as an efflorescent, historically located practice" (2017, 5). Weston for her money in this book favours the latter, I on the other hand, believe the former holds much promise in terms of giving us the tools to see the world from a more collective and "full-of-life" mindset both analytically and in the day to day[21]. Weston cleverly offers her use of 'intimacy' as a heuristic tool, this is something that can be applied directly to my analysis of the human non-human plant relationship formed with working on the CSA farm. One could certainly define the relationships between humans and non-humans at Feirm Beag as intimate. Intimacy with the plants that grow out food is one of the central tenets of the CSA model. The physical nature of the work involved in developing this intimacy and the knowledge produced through the relationship decentres the human, giving the non-human more consideration than it might otherwise receive. If our aim is to understand the world from a perspective which values a "full-of-life" mindset, then it is through intimacy that this perspective will be found. If we are to pursue the new animacy of "inseparability" then it stands to reason that by spending time with non-humans we will come to recognise the underlying connections that bind humanity with the trees, rocks and cows.

[20] Or assemblages within assemblages.

[21] Of course, there is room for both interpretations.

Phyto-Intimacies

While a plethora of plants survive and flourish without human interference, farm plants are generally not as resilient. These plants are "domesticated", requiring special attention to survive either due to their delicate-ness or non-native-ness to the area. As a result, to farm plants a level of intimacy is required. Through a level of "inseparability" the farmer will become aware of and tend to a plant's needs otherwise it will wilt and die leaving the farmer with nothing. Or worse than nothing; a field of perceived weeds and pests. The plant's condition or "feelings" needed to be taken into account. Looking to Ginn we see that much like farming at the CSA "gardening requires various corporeal, emotional and physical investments (Hinchfille et al. 2005), but at heart demands a strong empirical commitment to learning to 'intimately sense' plants as active beings that behave more or less according to the gardeners' desires." (2014, 535) This was an understanding voiced by a number of participants with Mia and Amy coming to mind. One had to not only understand that the plants had their own likes and dislike (soil type, amount of sunlight, water) but also would react to what humans did to them. This included actions such as cutting back plants that grew too fast compared to their neighbours, removing sick or dead plants and the harvesting of a plant's produce. Intimacy also enlightens one to the fact that the non-human something we can totally subject and that there exists antagonisms. The plants and animals at Feirm Bheag are to a certain extent at the mercy of the humans present but at the same time these beings cannot be fully controlled. Paradoxically, by being intimate with the non-humans shows that, much like the gardeners in Ginn's research, there is an 'inability to fully control the garden…thick with the composited remains of material presence, enlivened by dreams of detachment from certain creatures and an imagination of future enchantment to come' (2014, 541). We can look to the concept of "composition" crafted by Latour and and the "de-composition" implemented by Ginn in her study. Ginn states that gardening is a form of "composition" or "how things come to stick together" as 'composition is the work of building a common world' (2014, 533). The different beings coming together or coming apart to build a common work in the case of the farm being the humans, plants, animals and the multitude of other animate and inanimate non-humans. Ginn gives the example of the slug as a being that gardeners have "dreams of detachment". There is an understanding that slugs are an inevitable force that wreaks havoc on a gardener's plans and so must be dealt with by methods of removal. Through "de-composition", the acts of detaching ourselves from the slugs creates its own form of intimacy, one in which there is potential for a greater understanding of our place in relation to non-humans.

Agroecology offers another example of a sort of applied intimacy in a different vein to that of Ginn's "de-composition" suggestion. The term "agroecology" itself entered service early in the 20th century, much like the terms "biodynamic" and "organic". I am not the first to notice this but I have yet to come

across a satisfying answer as to why there appears to be a coalescing of thought around this time. That is, perhaps, because there is no one answer. The most likely cause is the increasing use of industrial farming methods and the introduction of artificial chemical fertilizers. While the advent of these was not uniform across the planet it did not take long for these new technologies to spread. Both the biodynamic and organic traditions clearly state the advent of chemical fertilizers and increasing industrialisation as motivations for their existence. It is not much of a stretch to apply the same to agroecology. For our purposes we are more interested in an offshoot of agroecology claimed to be its natural successor by its proponents: *deep* agroecology. It is, if nothing else, certainly a movement of "intimacies" with the non-human. As they share many characteristics, some would claim Community Supported Agriculture is a form of agroecology alongside the biodynamic and organic movements. There is much overlap but I believe that CSA in practice does deviate somewhat from agroecology in its purest sense. And so I think it is equally comfortable being introduced this late into our journey primarily due to the plethora of spiritual elements that make up the characteristics of deep agroecology and its deep agroecologists. Let us take Steven McFadden's definition which gives a succinct starting point; 'deep agroecology strives to marry the subtle spiritual realties of human beings and planet Earth into a balanced relationship with the gross physical realities of farms, technology, food, and flesh' (2019, xvi). Unlike agroecology, deep agroecology is a philosophy, or can be considered as 'spiritually intelligent agriculture' (2019, xvi). McFadden's 'Deep Agroecology: Farms, Food and Our Future', is unapologetic in its assertions about the future of humanity and the required need for us to adopt deep agroecology before it is too late for our species.

> '*I suppose it's a very, it can be traumatic for the plants to just be like stripped you know, of all their fruit.*'
>
> – *Amy*

'Plants are embedded in human culture and, most notably, in the human imagination which has long turned them into either love objects that mark the identity of a place or into entities that live with us, or into metaphors and symbols of various human affects' (Ivana 2021, 227). If we decide to adopt the more spiritual approach to understanding our non-human extended family let us consider the Gaia Paradigm. The Gaia Paradigm, or simply Gaia theory, in the general sense is the belief that the planet itself is a living organism. The theory appears to fit in nicely with social science's relations of exteriority model, (DeLanda, 2006) which is commonly described using an analogy of the organism to explain social structure and the reinforcing of social relations. In this analogy no part of the organism can function without the others and it is through this collaborative existence that society as we know it exists. Similarly in the Gaia Paradigm the Earth is imagined as one whole with constitutive parts that

interact with each other as to regulate and maintain life on Earth and the planet itself. There are varying sub-theories within the Gaia Paradigm, ranging in extremes, but this is the underlying fundamental concept behind the theory. Let us take a look at the foundational Gaia Hypothesis, first proposed by John Lovelock in 1979, although his inspirations originate much further back in history. While the Gaia Hypothesis is by many considered a spiritual endeavour this is not really the case at least in its initial formulaton. More heavily spiritual elements were attached to it as more people got their hands on Lovelock's book. There are many offshoots of the Gaia Paradigm, many facets of the aforementioned deep agroecology finds roots in it. But there are other theories with similar traits to the Gaia theory that came before it, their emphasis on arguing for the multitude of phenomenal consciousness. One of the first someone will easily come across is the concept of "biopsychism". Biopsychism being the belief that all living things on this planet is capable of consciousness on a level not unlike ours. The term itself is credited to Ernst Haeckel, commonly referred to as the German Charles Darwin, who coined it in 1892, although it has morphed over time as it has exchanged theoretical hands. To put in its broadest sense, biopsychism posits 'the every living thing is conscious or has phenomenal mental states' (Hamilton & McBrayer 2020, 93). This argument, that every living thing is conscious at some level, is a somewhat radical idea. As we have seen while there is still healthy amount of debate within the philosophical schools over the state of consciousness in non-humans, the empiricism of biology and psychology has deemed it highly unlikely. Compared to panpsychism, biopsychism appears rather tame. Panpsychism confidently puts forward the idea that it is not only living things are conscious but that 'everything has phenomenal mental states, qualia are literally everywhere…things like rocks, landscapes, and even quarks are conscious in some sense' (Hamilton & McBrayer 2020, 92). In other words, panpsychism argues that every single thing, human, non-human, organic, inorganic, macroscopic, microscopic, down to the fundamental building blocks of the universe, are in some way conscious. This, for a Western reader in particular, may be a difficult concept to wrap one's mind around. But in reality, panpsychism is not that radical of an idea in terms of human perceptions of the world. While not necessarily as explicitly stated as the definition of panpsychism puts it, considering everything around us to have some level of awareness of the world is a rather common thought. It was certainly something remarked on during my fieldwork but as I say not explicitly noted as a notion of panpsychism. Instead many of the comments that could be listed under panpsychisitic beliefs were off hand comments about how a plant seemed adamant on not growing out of spite or even a tool that was being willingly uncooperative. One could argue that this is not a marker of anything, simply turn-of-phrase, but combined with observations made in previous sections, there might be something to it. Hamilton and McBrayer do point out a unavoidable issue with panpsychism however, and biopsychism as well, and it is a problem that I mentioned above and so the reader might have been expected it; evidence is person-relative…your noticing the fact that X exists or the X is alive counts as evidence that X has a mind only if you believe that one of these high-level theories about consciousness is correct' (2020, 93). These two theories, while potentially useful in refining the human non-human relationship

suffers from the same fundamental anthropocentric problems as other theories for and against non-human consciousness. But ultimately the role of panpsychism in particular requires further study.

Addressing the topic of indigenous cosmologies, many of the contemporary Western theories of "Nature" borrow heavily from centuries old indigenous cosmologies, many of which inhabit some form of the "agricultural experience" laid out in chapter 4, although it is usually the case that parts of them are taken and given terms used to label them of Western design. Indigenous cosmologies, like those of the Nuer, Achuar, Zande, Hopi or Runa, have been the subject of anthropological enquiry for quite some time but since the mid-twentieth century have become increasingly popular among Western thinking albeit sometimes to the point of becoming fetishised. The adoption of such cosmologies has become so ubiquitous in alternative and urban agricultural movements that it is difficult to pinpoint what is from where. This is perhaps because as Cunningham and Scharper (2014) point out, 'the questions raised by cosmology – such as what is the place of the human within a bioregion, within a planetary ecosystem, and indeed within the universe itself – form the substructure of urban landscapes.' (2014, 494). Combined with the spiritual elements of the likes of anthroposophy and teikei, where one Western notion ends and an indigenous idea begins is not clear. The adoption and presence of indigenous eco-cosmologies is something that cropped up in not only my conversations with my participants but is also a common theme across much of the research into alternative farming projects.

Talking Without Language

'For animists, knowledge subjectifies instead of objectifying. Knowing something is acknowledging its subjectivity – its particular way of being connected to a field of meaningful relations on the environment'

– Herrera 2018, 29

What exactly makes something vegetal? That is, what qualities constitute a plant or anything non-human for that matter? To be vegetal is to have the characteristics of a plant but the term is commonly widening to include in some cases to animals and other non-humans. It seems quite obvious at first glance at what makes something a plant or a vegetable but the line does begin to blur when we introduced other non-humans that express traits that are generally considered more "human-like". We as humans like to make the distinction between ourselves and the non-human, be that vegetable or animal, or rock for that matter. Vegetal is one of the words we, in primarily English-speaking places,

use to speak about and imagine these differences. The use of words like vegetal and the philosophy that follows has shaped our thinking in the West. It is no mystery that language is an incredibly powerful tool that allows us to exert control over one another. Human history is filled to the brim with examples of this where the voice of the minority, the fringe, the vulnerable are silenced or drowned out. A prevailing narrative of the powerful can shape our thoughts convincing us of a particular way of doing things. There is a general assumption that language is one of the most important medium through which we interact with the world. And so, if this is true of language, what does this mean for our relationship with things that do not have language in a form we recognise, or not at all? This leads us to our day to day relationship with the plants[22] and our quest to understand and interact with them. In reality language is but one way through which humans communicate within their life-worlds. We humans, in fact, communicate in many other novel ways with each other and other non-human "selves". Kohn (2013) offers one of the better examples of how we might engage with non-human "selves". As we saw through his argument that all living things are intrinsically semiotic and the eco-cosmology of the Runa, Kohn levels the argument that all living beings engage with the world through signs, creating and responding to them, we can better grasp with reality beyond the human. Kohn expresses that 'social science's greatest contribution – the recognition and delimitation of a separate domain of socially constructed reality – is also its greatest curse' (2013, 7). I believe the neo-animists, such as Weston, would more or less agree with this statement although for Kohn animacy generally in its Western formulation usually doesn't go far enough. And for my part I have been arguing along the same lines in this essay. To move beyond the human, to understand the lifeworld(s) of the non-human, we must first grapple with the idea of a separate human-only construction of reality. Disagreeing somewhat with Kohn, this reality may very well exist and it may very well be based on a representation founded on linguistics. But this is addition to the non-linguistic forms of representation that non-human signs, the non-linguistic signs beyond the human. A criticism levelled against Kohn is with the apparent disregard he shows to spaces other than that of the forest and the Runa people. And while it may be true that he does not specifically delve into how his analytical framework might apply to a more urban space that is not to say that it does not have the capacity to do so. The urban world is quite a bit different from that of the forest, contrasting greatly in one way in particular, and the fact that unlike a forest living things in an urban setting are surrounded by and interact with a large number of non-living things. This is a contrast that is pointed out in critiques of the book, but there are ways to overcome this perceived shortfall of Kohn's arguments specifically with the incorporation of the theories of animation. Combining these two already closely related trains of thought while potentially raising other contradictions may prove successful in overcoming the issue of urban/suburban representation. And so, the application of Kohn's semiotic schema is still valid in an urban setting. While it may be more limited due to environmental factors, the fact remains that living, animate, beings are still producing, receiving and interpreting signs.

[22] This potentially applies to all non-animal non-humans.

To illustrate what I mean we should discuss what I believe to be a prime example of one of these living, animate beings, fungi. While our discussion throughout this essay has focused on plant and animal non-humans, fungi offer yet another example of non-human humanlike behaviour. They are another group of non-humans whose actions are difficult to consolidate with an anthropocentric view of the world. I have always had a slight unease when thinking about fungi. Whatever about plants fungi are something so strange that is it hard to know if they are alive or not. Much like plants and animals fungi vary greatly but unlike plants and animals their lifecycles do not follow the same rules that the majority of life follows. Life and death, as we know it, do not impose the same restrictions on many in the diverse family of the fungal kingdom. While it is now known that fungi are not plants and in fact share more in common with animals, they are a totally different set of creatures in almost every way conceivable. Within the kingdom we currently classify the lifeforms into four distinct categories of fungi divided by the means by which they sexually reproduce. Chytridiomycota, Zygomycota, Ascomycota and Basidiomycota. There are additional classifications of fungi, the primary of which are those that reproduce asexually, the Glomeromycota.[23] There is a specific variety of fungi we are chiefly interested in here, mycelia, a member of the Glomeromycota family. Until recently we were unaware of the extent through which the plant and fungi "communicate". Mycelium has a number of unique qualities that makes it act in ways that you and I might consider intelligent. Forming vast interconnected colonies mycelium lives in the soil and roots of trees and other plants, this much we have known for some time. What is truly fascinating and a recent discovery is that the mycelia appears to work *with* the plants. Not only does the mycelia work with its host plant, it seemingly facilitates communication between plants through mycorrhizal networks, which connect one plant's roots to another's, through which chemical signals can be sent and received. The transportation of nutrients throughout the vast underground networks of roots and colonies has also been observed, whereby plants, in this case trees can become aware of and send excess nutrients to another tree that is in some sort of difficulty. It is still not known if it is the plants that initiated this relationship or the mycelium but what is clear is there is deliberate actions being taken in ways that appear almost humanlike in communication and resource management. Research done on tomato plants showed that plant communication has specific purposes, one such being disease prevention, 'suggesting that plants can "eavesdrop on defense signals from the pathogen-challenged neighbours through CMNs [Common Mycorrhizal Networks] to activate defenses before being attacked themselves' (Song et al. 2010, 1). Green Beans show use of a similar defensive system with the ability to warn each other when under attack from hungry aphids using signals sent through the mycelial network connecting their roots (Babikova et al. 2013). This form of communication is clearly not language nor is it anywhere as complex, but at the same time it is

[23] There are other life forms that are called something fungi-esqe or share similar characteristics but do not belong to the fungi kingdom.

communication. I believe Kohn would happily include the mycelial network as a semiotic system, one that, unlike the Runa systems described by him, is predominantly closed off to humans. Unlike the semiotics of the forest, in which people play an intimate part, the mycelial system operates independently of humanity with our roles reduced to that of disrupter (through human activity like agriculture) and inhibitor (through chemical experiments). The signs that are created in the mycelial network are signs we can understand with the help of technological aids, but they are not meant for us.

This chapter is the part of the thesis where I attempt to make recommendations for how we might better understand the relationship between ourselves and selves and non-selves that are different to us. My time at the CSA highlighted disconnects between the human realm and the realms of the non-humans. Although there is no concrete evidence that many non-humans, plants included, are self-conscious, or feel pain, it is worth developing the perspective that they do for not only their sake but our own, should be taken into consideration when we imagine our place in the future(s), hence my mentioning of "phyto-intimacy" at the beginning of this journey. While there is certainly no consensus, the research done up to now would seem to point to the reality that plants, and many other non-humans, do not possess consciousness. The consciousness we humans possess appears to be something rather unique, if not specifically to us, to a very select group of beings on this planet. But for some the jury is still out. There are many flaws in our methods and tools for understanding our own consciousness let alone that of other beings. And there can be no mistake that the methods and tools we do have are incredibly anthropocentric, relying on qualifiers that we would recognise as markers for consciousness. But this can also be said for those who firmly plant their feet in the pro non-human consciousness camp which relies on many of the same qualifiers, for they are all we know. The caveat of the former is that there is a general acceptance that we do not truly understand the nature of consciousness and by extension its manifestation in non-humans. However, maybe the most helpful thing to do is simply ignore the debate entirely. I say this not out of any disrespect for the researchers or for their work. In fact, I find the endeavour fascinating and follow it with great interest. But until such a time that we know for sure as to whether non-humans, particularly plants, harbour consciousness or not, it may be best to assume that on some level they in fact do. This is something that came across in the attitudes toward Feirm Bheag and the living things that could be found there, from the foxes, robins, insects, and leeks. It may very well be valuable to adopt the views held by panpsychism in cases like this, not for the truth of their assertions but for the intentions behind those assertions. This is not to say that we should cease harvesting plants for food but through giving consideration to the non-humans that inhabit this world with us may offer new conceptions and new ways of enacting environmental stewardship. The human imagination is already capable of such conceptions for it was the human imagination that formulated the argument to begin with. The imagined future(s) of Feirm Beag somewhat rely on the assumption that all non-human beings hold some level of awareness of the world, for the future of human

stewardship requires it. One's imagination is powerful, laden with our beliefs and life experiences. It helps construct the world around you and allows you to understand your present and project into your past and future. It is a key part of your decision making process. And so, taking the leap and making the assumption that we are not unique in our abilities to think and, more importantly perhaps, feel may be what gives us impetus to act for the better of humanity but also everything and everyone we share the Earth with.

Imagining and Practicing Alterity

'Plants and animals, river sand rocks, meteors and the seasons do not exist all together in an ontological niche defined by the absence of human beings. And this seems to hold true whatever may be the local ecological characteristics, political regimes and economic systems, and the accessible resources and the techniques employed to exploit them'

– Descola 2013, 30-31

There is the imagining of prediction and anticipation. This imagining is fuelled by numerous sources of information in the present combined with an anticipation of the future. Much as Ginn noted on the experiences of the gardener; "Gardening as an anticipatory practice in which the future has palpable force, as the gardener works through their desires to bring certain beings and a sense of place into presence" (2014, 535). This imagination is not just within the mind however as it draws directly from the world outside of one's head. This process of imagining can be termed "material imagination" (Koukouti & Malafouris 2020) in which the imagination is also related to 'aspects of the material environment' (2020, 40). Through prediction, anticipation and interaction with the material world thing can be brought forth from one's imagination into the physical world. Koukouti and Meeker offer the example of a potter making a vase in that 'is it the actual engagement with the clay that offers an opportunity to imagine' (2020, 43). The same process can be said to occur a Feirm Bheag in which it is through engagement with the soil, the seeds, weather and other non-human entities that offers the opportunity to imagine and create. When rotavating a field or sowing seeds my participants were partaking in "imaginative praxis" through which the process of their imagined future outcome, the harvesting of plants, come into being. When Mia would stand at the edge of the 1 acre site and survey the plots yet to be planted with crops, she would tell me in great detail what each spot on the farm would be growing, what it would look like and how much produce we would get from the future harvests of plants that did not exist yet. Her lump of clay slowly finding its shape guided by her hands and her imagination. Brigstocke and Noorani remarked how 'entities that inhabit unimaginably vast temporal

frames, such as the climate, nuclear waste, fossils, and plastics, can only phase in and out of human perceptibility' (2016, 3). As these entities, including plants, phase in and out of human perception it is the imagination bridges the gap as plants go from non-existence to existing in both the human mind and the material world. In this conflux an imagination that is beyond the human begins to form.

"Alterity" is not a new concept in anthropology or wider social science discourses in general. However, it is something that should be in the mind of every anthropologist, now more than ever. Our imaginations are a testbed for alterity. We all run scenarios in our heads concerning all facets of life past, present and future. We may not fully understand what the mind is or how it works, but the assertion that the imagination is a powerful thing is an assertion easily made. Many have attempted to answer this question with varied success but ultimately the human imagination remains somewhat a mystery. It is an inextricable part of us, deeply connected to the very fiber of our being and yet we know little of how it works. More interestingly, we don't really know why we have it nor what actually makes it tick. But what we do know, as anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, historians, geographers, artists, engineers, biologists and physicists, is that the imagination is capable of amazing feats. What the human mind is able to imagine borders on the infinite. Our collective imaginations have allowed us to mold the Earth more than any other species. It has given us the mental tools to create great civilisations throughout history, culminating for better or worse in the global world we have today. Our imaginations are powerful. They allow us to be the creators of alternative meanings, of alternative realities, of alternative feelings of the flow of time. We may not know much more about how our imaginations come into being or how they work, much like how much of the brain is still a mystery but we do know that our imaginations give us the ability to see things that have already passed us (memory), and things that have yet to come (anticipation, projection, prediction). As anthropologists, the imagination is an important source of information while out in the field with our participants. It helps both of us, as researchers, and our participants to understand and explain the world around them. As Whorf put it; 'this 'thought world' is the microcosm that each man carries about within himself, by which he measures and understands what he can of the microcosm' (1956,147). While Whorf's particular interest was more on what role language has in the construction of reality and thought, to me the connections one can draw between his arguments and how one's imagination might operate are evident. I do not want to get drawn too deeply into whether reality, time and so on is relative or depends on language here, we did some of that in chapter four in relation to the bi-temporal life-world experiences. Whorf would assert that language does indeed make these things relative, but his concept of "thought worlds", slightly altered, certainly merits consideration in a discussion such as this one. Our imagination is certainly a personal "thought world" where we can think through scenarios, consider alternatives and imagine the past, present and future. It is the imagination from which alterities are born. These "thought worlds", while personal, are to a certain extent a product of our environment as well, while this does not detract

from the internal landscape of one's thoughts, it is an important note. Alterities are informed by the world around us, this is because by their very nature they are created in some type of opposition to the existing structure of the world outside the self. Without the world as it is no alternative can come to be conceptualised to oppose it in one way or another. Of course, nothing in our shared world is unaffected by our imaginations either. The alternatives we create internally have the potential to lead us to act, speak, and see in certain ways. This eventually can lead to individuals with certain conceptualised alternatives coming together and creating something physically alternative to the prominent form of thinking or doing whether that be in the form of governance, economics, or agriculture. Our thought worlds are in effect our imaginations. When we consider groupings larger than the individual and their thought world there is a certain level of uniformity to imagined pasts, presents, and futures, regardless of our individual imaginations. Futures, as mentioned already, are informed by our social, political, and economic environments. Not to mention nothing spreads faster than an idea. Embers from one imagination can quickly plant the seeds of a flame in another's. Ideas spread through a number of mediums, unsurprisingly the main medium is that of language but other sounds and images can also provide powerful transmitters and/or creators of thoughts. This rough "consensus creator", the mechanisms through which ideas are communicated can create similar conceptions. This is turn is responsible for the creation of groups of individuals with common agendas and beliefs, and by extension groups that belief in an alternative way of doing things, like Feirm Beag.

I cannot count how many times I was told by or overheard someone saying how this community based, or community supported, farming was the future, the way forward, the only hope for sourcing humanity's food far into the abstract future. We can question what exactly is meant by "community" in this context but I believe we can take it to mean community in the broadest geographic sense, a group of people living and interacting in a particular geographic place, a much broader definition than the groups we discussed in chapter two. Although the communities that support these projects can be classified far more accurately as cultural communities. Regardless, it is these communities, the farmers, the volunteers, the paying members collecting their weekly share of food that are practicing a form of alterity. An alternative to the promises of modernity and 'progress', an "imaginative challenge of living without those handrails, which once made us think we knew, collectively, where we were going' (Tsing 2015,2). For some of those involved, this is not done on a conscious level. To contradict myself, for some it is not about creating and living alterity at all. But for many it is a collection of actions that openly question the established methods through which we grow and consume food and how we establish relationships with the land and other non-humans that inhabit these spaces with us. The practicing of alterity at the same time generates a present and a potential future. This practicing can take many forms but the primary method at Feirm Bheag must be the physical act of farming itself. The practices of growing and harvesting a plant, from seedling to fully formed produce, in itself was an act

of alterity. It was such in the sense that as opposed to going to a supermarket and buying one's lettuce or tomatoes one could have an intimate relationship with the plant from its germination to when it bared fruit. One could call this "alterity through intimacy". Through the physically intimate act of growing one's own food or at the very least growing food directly for a small group of people creates alternatives by transforming the present and has the potential to inform more alternatives in the future. As previously mentioned, through intimacy comes the bi-temporal experience, and through that comes alterity. Although it is not linear it is a rhythmic cyclical feedback loop, constantly rejuvenating.

There is something else we should consider here. That is, the significant role the past plays in the particular conceptions and practices of alternative I have encountered. As we have discussed, a form of "jetzteit", the radical recursive-ness dredging up a vague agrarian past is a common image around Ferim Bheag. The importance of this vague past has been established, however the past we're discussion in this section is much more recent and concrete. The Irish, no different to the Western or global, past is scarred and recent history is no different. Most of those I spent time with in and around the farms were there by choice but not necessarily a choice they made willingly. It was because they had no choice or it was the only choice presented to them after economic ruin and year after year of crippling austerity. For some it was the best thing that ever happened or at least that's what they told me. For others it was a challenge faced with grim determinism for fear of what would come if their farm failed. This collective past impacts the present my participants find themselves in. There were exceptions to this but for the majority of those I spent time with who were farmers or agriculturists became what they are now in the within the last 10 years. Coming from very real past feelings of disillusionment and wariness of the 'old ways', the future(s) they spoke of were in some ways more hopeful or it was simple anything had to be better than what came before. It is safe to say that for a number of members and the majority of the participants, alterity was certainly on the mind when it came to the CSA. From belief in the need to dramatically switch up the dominant economic system, universal basic income (UBI), being a popular topic or seeking alternatives to mainstream industrial agriculture foodstuffs, the versions of alterity espoused were many. Is all of this, to a certain extent, idealised? Perhaps to a certain extent it is. The imagination is the home of many things including idealisation. Romanticising is something the human mind is particularly good at, whether it be romanticising a past that never really existed or a future that may never come to pass. That does not mean these things are not or cannot become real. In fact imaginative idealisation like that found at Feirm Bheag is exactly what is required to create the present and future they wish to realise.

From all of this comes another interesting strand of alterity and one that has cropped up indirectly throughout the thesis, that of alternative identity. But of particular interest here, alternative political

identity. Alongside the plants being grown there is a, pardon the pun, a grassroots nation building of sorts within alternative agriculture scenes such as Ferim Bheag. It appears to be a reimagining of the nation, or at least some part of it. Rebuilding from a bygone past or securing a near future that remains to be seen. Could you construe some of the rhetoric as some form of latent nationalism? Perhaps. But I don't think it is, at least not in the right-wing nationalistic vein. The version we have seen take hold in many parts of the Global North. But it is still very much about the nation as place as something to be protected from outside intervention. Mainly food from the outside, corrupted by the pollution caused by exporting it to Ireland, by the corporations who own the discount supermarkets, and by the politicians who have all but ignored the plight of the starved community farm model. While hardly ever termed "Big Agro" by my research participants there was certainly an animosity toward the large farmers and faceless organisations that bought from them. My only difficulty in writing about this "proto-nation building" is the lack of conversation I had with participants about it. There were exceptions and so I have no doubts that some form of nation building was under way but the claims of apolitical-ness shrouded the clearly political mechanisms in a veil of haze. This was not deliberate on the part of my participants. As I have previously stated there was explicit awareness of the political nature of Feirm Bheag by some, including Kerry. It was simply the fact that other factors such as the food itself or the therapeutic qualities of the farm overshadowed what I can only describe as an ambivalence toward the potential political productions of the CSA. As I have brought up alternative political identity I would like to briefly note that we generally do not encounter alterity without what can only be described as intransigence, manifesting as form of mild dogmatism. Arguably for alterity to be sustained in any meaningful way you need a sprinkle of dogmatism and a stalwart defence of one's ideals. Dogmatism is something imagined, informed by an imagined past and present and a potential future. Dogma in this sense is not necessarily a negative force. While undoubtedly dogma presents its own range of issues for individuals within a group and the group itself, it can act as an energy for change. The refusal to engage with contravening ideals while potentially damaging in the long run can protect something like a CSA from undesirably outside influence. There was certainly a strand of intransigence among many of my research participants and this could be seen as both a positive and a negative. On the one hand, they could reaffirm their beliefs between each other without fear of judgement, they were all roughly on the same page after all. On the other hand, a lack of engagement with anything that espoused different or "mainstream" views in some cases could result in increased isolationism. To clarify, this specifically relates to my research participants views and feelings on agriculture and food production, this was not in every aspect of their lives.[24] It is possible then that this intransigence contributed to the ambivalence toward political action among the majority of Feirm Bheag's community.

[24] Although there were variations in so far as how committed to the cause a person was and how that would reflect across all facets of their life.

As this section's final remark, plants themselves could be considered arbiters of alterity both inside and outside the human mind. In turn the plants themselves becoming heralds of the new "proto-nation". Meeker and Szabari make a compelling case for plants in that they 'make available to our imagination a life that continues without humans or renders the human unidentifiable to itself…vegetality becomes a propulsive force, as humans are moved by anxiety about our own survival, a desire for companionship, and both delight in and horror at our own insignificance' (2020, 7). In other words plant matter challenge notions of what it means to be human and what it means to exist in a world inhabited by a myriad of non-human entities. Through this challenge new forms of alterity can be formulated inside the human imaginary all the while these alterities can exist outside and independent of the human as well.

Whose Imagination is it Anyway?

'In any case, if the role of imagination is to free us from the confines of our present perceptual reality, that can only happen by reaching out and beyond the spatial and temporal horizon of individual experience' (Koukouti & Malafouris 2020, 39). With our discussion on the collective form of popular imagination(s) in the previous chapter, there is a question over what role the non-human has in the human imagination and what potential there is for a non-human imagination beyond the human. Quoting Bennett, 'metal is always metallurgical, always an alloy of the endeavour of many bodies, always something worked on by geological, biological, and often human agencies. And human metalworkers are themselves emergent effects in the vital materiality they work' (Bennett 2010:60). Bakers, gardeners, and farmers are, in the same way metalworkers are themselves emergent. At the same time much like how metal is "always metallurgical". The plants of Feirm Bheag are also exist as alloys, constituted of many different parts and agencies. In other words, when we speak of imagination, in the context that which I have place it throughout this thesis, is it not one static human imagination. Instead, much like the humans and non-humans themselves who are composites of many different things the "imagination" is constituted through phenomena that are human and phenomena that are beyond the human. While not out of line with the overarching discussion we've had up to this point the idea that our imaginations are not totally ours is a strange one. It is one thing to accept that non-humans selves have imaginations. It is another thing entirely to accept that even our own imaginations are not ours alone. But this is how we construct collective imaginations, it is how the popular imagination we discussed in the last chapter comes to exist. To include non-human elements, "endeavours of many bodies", is perhaps not so farfetched. To better understand our place in the world and our relationships to all the other beings that call this planet home, we may need to not only decentre

the human, but also de-centre the solely human imagination. As Meeker & Szabari state, 'On the one hand, the plant appears to withdraw from a human economy of desires…But it also produces profound effects on us, including setting in motion our imagination' (2020, 15). And is this due to do a "plant blindness" that we find it difficult to comprehend their consciousness, their "liveliness"? Or is it as Bishop, Higgins and Määttä noted that plants 'inhabit such different ways of being' (3, 2020), in the world compared to human imagining that consciousness in a human sense is not the correct way to think about plants' to begin with. If we look to what this means in the real-world sense of practice at Feirm Bheag, we see that attempting to imagine the perspective of the non-human was common at the CSA. Borne from the intimacy of being around the plants and animals of the farm on a regular basis fostered this beyond-the-human recognition. This was done through the off-hand comments about how a plant might be feeling about where it was growing or wondering why some plants were performing better or worse than its neighbours. When we look to indigenous examples of human – plant composites like that which exist, Descola's (2013) example of the Achuar stands out. Achaur believe that plants have souls in similar to those that humans possess, plants are not considered wholly different from other living things. And so 'Achuar women do not "produce" the plants that they cultivate: they have a personal relationship with them, speaking to each one so as to touch its soul and thereby to win it over, and they nurture its growth and help it to survive the perils of life, just as a mother helps her children' (2013,324). Descola referencing animism in a general sense makes another important observation relating to how we might construct an imagination beyond the human: 'Existing beings endowed with an interiority analogous to that of humans are all subjects that are animated by a will of their own' (2013, 282). The "interiority" of these beings conceptualised as analogous to a human's in which an imagination not quite our own plays such a central role opens up potential understandings of how non-human imaginaries may come to be.

Light

Energy can neither be created, nor destroyed, only transformed from one form into another.

1st Law of Thermodynamics (Abbreviated)

At this point I believe I have given my primary argument. Whether or not the non-human does indeed possess consciousness or language or the ability to perceive time it does not really matter. Instead what matters, in a rather anthropocentric way, is the human perception of these characteristics in the non-human. This manifests as the bi-temporal experience, the non-linear rhythmic temporality experienced by those of Feirm Bheag. From this an alternative way of understanding ourselves and the non-humans of this world is open to us. This is not necessarily new knowledge, for it is quite common in cultures across the planet but it is lacking in the West. And if we in the West are to understand our place in the present and our possible futures we must account for the non-humans all around us. And so, it is in this last section that I would like to present a somewhat more experimental set of reflections. It will probably come as no surprise to the reader that I would like to present an idea that may seem somewhat out of left field. The role of Light. Energy is a fundamental property of our universe; without it nothing can exist. No matter how deep down the bizarre cosmic phenomena one goes energy of some form will always be there. Light is one such manifestation of energy, a form of radiation that makes life on Earth possible. The following thoughts were spurred on by a discussion had by McFadden in his 'Deep Agroecology' in which he highlighted 'panpsychism' (2019, 70) the belief that everything in existence, be that non-human, human, animate or inanimate has a minim level of consciousness and that consciousness itself is a physical thing that consists of some form of matter. It this discussion McFadden raises the question of light's involvement and it is from this question that the following spawned. However, I will be taking this question of light's role in a different direction and ask a different question; can light act as a medium of assemblage? Firstly, we will not be making the assumption that consciousness is carried through physical particles that is not our interest here. Our interest is strictly on whether we can consider light as an assisting tool to better understand the assemblages of human non-human relationships. Light and the energy produced from it is one of the few things in this universe that connects all living things and it responsible for many of the processes that take place on this planet. Light also conveys information. Through nuclear fusion as the heart of our star, the sun, light is produced and travels through the vacuum of space at unimaginable speed, hurtling into Earth's magnetic field, then the atmosphere, and then the surface of the planet. Some light energy is reflected back into space but most is absorbed by the surface by both living and non-living things. Let us take a plant: the Jerusalem artichoke. A native of North America it is one of the more exotic plants grown at Feirm Bheag. This species of sunflower harvested for the lumpy tuber it produces

commonly grows stems of 3 meters which allows the plant to maximise its solar intake. Our particular Jerusalem artichoke has been growing through the summer months and is now standing tall thanks to its numerous stems of green leaves soaking up light. Inside these leaves the process of photosynthesis has been busy turning the absorbed light into energy to fuel the plants growth, including the tuber under the ground which will be harvested soon. The tuber which will be taken out of the ground and eaten, has been created by light energy. That energy is passed on to us humans when we eat the tuber, thus passing on the light energy. The energy we derive from food is what keeps us alive, it is the basic necessity of food that allows us to do everything we as humans do. Importantly, food is also the basic requirement for all non-human life to exist as well. All living things need energy, this energy comes from light. Kohn argues that we are semiotic beings, in fact all living things are semiotic, 'signs make us what we are' (2013, 9). And as Kohn states signs 'don't squarely reside in sounds, events, or words. Nor are they exactly in bodies or minds. They can't be precisely located in this way because they are ongoing relational processes' (2013, 33). Perhaps what all signs share is light? It is through the transfer of energy, and information, that these relational processes between living beings can take place. Admittedly, there are questions over how one could analyse such a possibility and some might question whether it is in the remit of our discipline to begin with. To the first point, I do not currently have much in the way of answers but further study may present them. To the second I can only offer my opinion; anthropology has a duty to push barriers while opening up new possibilities and should not be ring-fenced into a particular corner of enquiry. Anywhere we humans go, anything we humans do or think, anthropology should be there as our discipline should be as comfortable existing on the fringes as it is on the well-trodden paths. Just like time light does not only travel in straight lines.

Concluding Thoughts

'The destiny of nations depends on the manner in which they are fed.'

– Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin

I have been at somewhat of a loss when it comes to concluding this piece of writing. This is a problem I have when concluding any piece of writing for that matter if truth be told. This dissertation being the longest piece I have ever written only compounds the problem. Concluding one's thoughts has always seemed to me to be needlessly finite. For as we all know, rarely does the thinking stop after the last word is written. Does one ever truly feel comfortable 'concluding' a piece of academic work? I honestly don't think so, for countless papers, articles and essays have been written with the words "requires further study" or something to that effect. Thus, concluding this dissertation where I have is in some ways arbitrary. One could write endlessly on the relationships between humanity and the non-human, how those relationships manifest themselves in alternative agricultures and where all the interconnected facets of this vast complex web might be leading. But I choose to conclude now. This world we inhabit, the physical reality which we pass through and that passes through us, is one of mystery. When we think we finally know something, a kernel of "truth", we quickly discover that it is but another piece of a grander puzzle. I do not know what this grand, cosmically scaled, puzzle is but I hope that through the pages of this dissertation I have added to the pursuit of another piece, another kernel. I realise that in the course of this dissertation I have raised more than a few questions, some of which are left wanting of answers. But as the great physicist Albert Einstein is attributed saying, 'the more I learn, the more I realise how much I don't know', and as I write this conclusion those words have never felt more appropriate. There is still so much to learn about our place in the universe and that of the non-humans that call this ball of rock we all live on home.

It may be useful to include here a quick review of what we have covered thus far. In chapter 1 I explored what a CSA is and how it comes to be alongside the various possible places and movements a CSA can draw inspiration from. I noted that pinpointing origins is a tricky business and in the case of CSA, nigh impossible. I concluded that CSA is an amalgamation, a convergent revolution, spawned many times over as a response to a variety of events and threats. In chapter 2 I looked at what constitutes a "community" at Feirm Bheag as well as what inspires the people of the CSA to involve themselves with the project. I discussed the findings that the community of Feirm Bheag is fluid with many different

cohorts moving in rough unison. We saw how each person has their own reasons for becoming a member of the CSA, be it for health, reconnection with "nature", or to save the planet. I also distinguished the suburban from the urban as well as thought about what resistances arise from the CSA model. In chapter 3 the precarious nature of the CSA's existence, differing attributions of value of those inside and outside of the CSA and the "last bastion feeling" were discussed. This "last bastion feeling" manifested as a fear of encroachment by the surrounding suburban landscape. With the example of the construction of the warehouse in the adjacent plot, I explored threats to the farm's sovereignty. This chapter concluded with a discussion of "sovereignty through labour" and the idea that resistance, independence, different ways of being, are made manifest through practices, language and thought. In this way alterity is enacted. In chapter 4 we encountered the bi-temporal lifeworld(s) of Feirm Bheag and considered the roles language and culturally embedded concepts play in the production of lifeworld experiences. This led to the formulation of "bi-temporality", the state in which Feirm Bheag exists and offers to those who come to the farm. This "bi-temporality" is informed by the coming together of differing life-worlds, different ways of perceiving and understanding the world. This leads us to the conclusion that Feirm Bheag is a place of dialogue and through the act of intimately caring for non-humans Feirm Bheag invites humans into this dialogue. In chapter 5 I thought about the importance of the human "popular imagination" through the lens of science-fiction in an attempt to understand the role "hope", and "fear" to a lesser extent, play in the perception of both our present(s) and future(s). We began be recounting the history of the popular imagination using science-fiction as the example. This allowed us to see how prevalent cultural ideas are both created and reflected by the popular imagination. I illustrated this through the use of Tutton's (2017) "wicked futures" before concluding with the power of "hope". In chapter 6, the final chapter, we delved into beyond the human relationships and what they mean for our present(s) and future(s), for both humanity and the non-humans of Earth. We explored the definitions of consciousness, the concept of nociception, and "whose imagination is it anyway"? I offered the reader some thoughts on what alterity can be and how one might imagine it. I also suggest that light may well function as a form of connection between all things and briefly ponder the possibilities would come from such an analysis.

I discussed all of the above matters with three aims in mind, those mentioned at the beginning of the literature review. Firstly, to broach the subject of the human imagination and its role in creating and projecting the present(s) and the future(s). Secondly, to investigate the human-non-human relationship in the context of a suburban community supported farm. And thirdly, to highlight the CSA through an anthropological lens and contribute to the ongoing discourse around CSAs within our discipline. I will address the last aim first. The discussion in chapters 2 and 3 showed that Feirm Bheag exists in a state of precarity but also benefits from a strong core group of supporters albeit each with their own reasons for being involved with the project. My research participants may have their own individual reasons

for supporting Feirm Bheag but their motivations do overall. Whether it is a desire for fresh local food, to be more eco-friendly, or to be more in-tune with Nature and escape their urban monotony. The first and second aims are broached over the course of the latter 3 chapters. In chapter 4 we saw how Feirm Bheag acts as a locus of two, at least, life-word experiences. These different life-worlds although connected have become disparate in all but a few places in the suburbs with the CSA being one of them. Through the interactions between these two sparks a "bi-temporality" through which one can glean some understanding of a life-world other than their own. In chapter 5, we examined the role of the human "popular imagination" through which we humans conceive our present(s) and future(s). I offer the example of science-fiction as an example through which I argue that regardless of how unknowable contingent futures are they are primarily dictated by two overarching feelings, that of "fear" and that of "dread". In chapter 6, we discussed the possibilities, making distinctions between the feeling of pain and the sensation of nociception. I made the singular argument that regardless of whether non-humans, be they animate or inanimate, are "conscious" or "conscious" we should treat them as such for our sake as much as theirs. In doing so it will not only help us change our perceptions in the battle to save our planet, but will also change our perceptions about ourselves.

'Flora speaks volumes not only of how we imagine ourselves, but also of how we, humans, interact with the natural world'.

(Ivana 2021,227)

I believe that striving to better understand our relationship with the non-humans we share the planet with is one of the most important endeavours we can embark on. This research goes some way to furthering this endeavour highlighting something within a context that anthropology has had a tendency to overlook, the mundanity of suburbia. But it is in the mundane that we will find solutions to humanity's most existential questions, in the everyday actions and practices of humans and the interactions these produce with those beyond the human, the animals, plants, soil, and spirits. As we as a species continue to become more urban, more suburban, we need to understand how this affects our relationship with the non-humans around us. Non-humans are also becoming increasingly urbanised, and suburbanised, without much say in the matter. It is in these suburban places, the antithesis of, in the eyes of a traditional anthropology, the novel, the exotic, that we find some of the most important processes for helping us understand our future(s) both near and far. If this research has shown anything it is that multiple intertwined ontologies exist right outside on our collective doorstep in the West. We, as anthropologists, do not need to travel to the deepest depths of the Amazon to find alternative ways of being in the world. In what we may categorise as "mundane", a sense of "been there, done that", there is a cornucopia of ontological meshing in places like Feirm Bheag. There is much more to be

explored in this evolving and expanding urban macrocosm. The research presented in the preceding pages of this thesis serves to illustrate only a fraction of the possibilities. When it comes to Feirm Bheag one could say that there is a tone of pessimism permeating the pages of the thesis and I have to agree. But this is a pessimism, not of the CSA itself, but of the circumstances it finds itself in. Currently in Ireland there is little support for small local alternative food initiatives and this does not look to change in the near future. And so projects such as Feirm Bheag are somewhat on their own. However there are glimmers of hope generated from within the CSA, new imaginaries, new alternative presents and new visions of the future. With these come the possibility of something different to the status quo, a system that rejects neoliberal consumerism in the place of a more holistic, community focused enterprise. The anti-neoliberal rejection, however, is not prefigurative (Törnberg 2021). We have seen that the CSA, in fact, relies heavily on the State to fund its expansion and activities beyond merely existing. The CSA model itself does not, in practice, 'instantiate radical social change' (Törnberg 2021, 83). Instead, we see something perhaps more in line with Moore's "singular metabolism", in which 'capitalism *and its limits* [are] co-produced through shifting configurations of human and extra-human nature' (Moore 2017, 292). Prefiguration presupposes a separation, between the normative and the alternative, but this runs the risk of ignoring the fact that 'class, capital, and empire' (Moore 2017, 287), are not separate from Nature. Much like us humans our abstract creations exist within the world. The same world in which all things beyond the human exist.

For the CSA to survive in its current state it relies on individualistic consumer choices from the "green middle class" and the potential for self-exploitation of the farmer. However this cannot take away from the positive, environmentally conscious stewarding of the land that makes up the core of the project. Feirm Bheag is a prime example of the good that can come from a CSA project, spreading out far beyond the confines of the farm itself. As we have seen, community supported agriculture is capable of remaking our relationship with food in the West but it is also capable of remaking our relationship with what lies beyond the human. This affords we anthropologists an opportunity, to see the remaking of Western rapport with food and with the "natural world" at large all through the seemingly mundane activity of being intimately involved and invested in the lives of other beings. But Feirm Bheag's benefits go beyond our anthropological curiosity. We are, for the most part, completely out of touch with the other parts of the natural world, those who make up the other parts being starkly aware of us. Feirm Bheag is a place of (re)introduction, another temporal plain. What places like Feirm Bheag tell us is that there is a want, a need perhaps, to (re)explore our wider world and not remain relatively cut-off from the myriad of processes that make our lives liveable. It is a place for people from all walks of life to come and intimately engage with all the living things taken for granted in the capitalist machine. Giving this ability to all, the ability to see outside of oneself and the life-world they are accustomed to, is a most powerful thing. I do not mean to romanticise here, instead point out the potential benefit of

Feirm Bheag to us (all humans), other living things, and the planet itself. With that said alternative agricultures in general face nothing short of a continually steep uphill battle but this offers its own opportunities. And as for the CSA and projects around Ireland like it, they're like a man with a wheelbarrow, it's all ahead of them. I will leave you with a final quote, a favourite of mine that I think exemplifies the enormity of everything and the fragility of our own planet. An excerpt of the famous passage by Carl Sagan remarking on the awe inspiring "Pale Blue Dot" photo:

> *'Look again at that dot. That's here. That's home. That's us. On it everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you ever heard of, every human being who ever was, lived out their lives. The aggregate of our joy and suffering, thousands of confident religions, ideologies, and economic doctrines, every hunter and forager, every hero and coward, every creator and destroyer of civilization, every king and peasant, every young couple in love, every mother and father, hopeful child, inventor and explorer, every teacher of morals, every corrupt politician, every "superstar", every "supreme leader", every saint and sinner in the history of our species lived there – on a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam.'*
>
> \- *Carl Sagan, 1994*

Fig.22: In the "Field"

Pandemic

The world has changed. There's a decent argument out there that change is the only evidence you need to see that time exists. But change comes in all shapes and sizes and sometimes change isn't really change at all. Then there are events, events that happen maybe once in a few generations that create the conditions that are just right for producing something truly different to what came before. Humanity, for all its achievements, for all its failures, needs these seismic events. These are the things that make up our history books. The COVID-19 outbreak is one such event. I had not intended on writing about pandemics when I set out on this PhD but it would now appear I, like many of my peers, am indeed writing about a pandemic. The pandemic. I wrote a little about in chapter 3, "Hope & Popular Hopelessness" and have mentioned it throughout but I feel as though it requires a short section. An addendum of its own considering the impact it has had and the potential future implications it could have. This addendum could have been broken up into its relevant pieces and inserted into relevant chapters, indeed some of it has. But I would like to use this final section not as an analysis of the pandemic that has been done throughout the preceding chapters but to simply act as a record of my experiences and those research participants, friends, directly around me.

In early 2020, after the New Year had been rung in and life began the humdrum of another year in a new decade, rumblings of a virus originating in China making its way over to Ireland began to circulate. It was not until the 29th February that it was formally declared that SARS-CoV-2, the novel coronvirius-19 had arrived at Ireland's shores. Although, there is a body of evidence that now suggests the virus had been circulating around the planet for months prior to the declaration of pandemic. At first many did not take the virus seriously, I naively among them. Looking back at my fieldnotes, I had been at the farm up until the 28th February having to finish up my work early that day due to back pain I wrote:

"Wasn't in great nick today, couldn't even lift a few tires. Ended up just moving the seedling trays into the rain to give them a bit of watering…now for a week break from the farm."

What I did not know was that it would be almost 3 months before I would step foot on the farm again and would only be there on and off till the end of 2020 and mid 2021 due to Ireland going in and out of lockdown. The pandemic brought many aspects of our lives to a complete standstill, my fieldwork included. Luckily for me the majority of the fieldwork had already been completed bar a number of interviews. Many other people were not as fortunate as me when it came to the upheaval caused directly by the virus.

There was a surge of concern with food, specifically growing your own food or supporting those nearest who do. A swell of newspaper articles, opinion pieces, how-to videos and social media live streams came to meet it. While I was not able to visit Feirm Beag at the beginning of the national lockdown due to it being farther than the travel restrictions permitted I was kept in the loop of all the happenings over those months by Mia through texts and photos on WhatsApp. As head farmer, Mia was the only person permitted to be at the farm during the heaviest lockdown months. I did not spend this time idle however and used it to conduct a number of interviews with participants online. While not the ideal method of carrying out ethnographic interviews, the sometimes stilted and uncomfortable interview setup yielded some of the more interesting thoughts from participants. The pandemic made many things around the world come to an abrupt stop as if someone pulled the handbrake while zipping down the motorway. Relating this chapter 4, there was a sense of being "out of phase"; reality had changed all around us in an instant and the normal societal rules we play by were thrown into disarray. This "out of phase" period gave way to a wave of reassessment, of one's job, lifestyle, relationships. Much like the turmoil caused by the Crash of 2007/08 this period was swift and unforgiving for many. Feirm Bheag on the other hand came off relatively well all things considered. Interest in the farm, the CSA model and in alternative urban agriculture in general surged. Perhaps the cyclical experience of the farm lent a level of certainty. The waiting list for membership grew to its largest in the farm's history and involvement with the farm, when the states of lockdown were eased was at the highest I had experienced during my time there. Volunteer numbers had begun to rise before the first lockdown but continued to do as the first and second lockdowns progressed. All the gains made on increased member turnout remained steady. And so, from the outside looking it all seemed to be going well for Feirm Bheag. For many, due to the myriad of changing restrictions, the CSA became a temporary refuge once a week. In a time when socializing had been all but banned, travel limits imposed and a general fear of being anywhere or around large groups of people for too long the farm offered a relatively safe place for one have some social interaction all the while being compliant with the lockdown restrictions. Of course at the highest level of restrictions, level 5+, the farm was all but deserted bar Mia and Kerry operating a skeleton crew of two to maintain the farm and run the collection days.

In the latter half of 2020 I had continued to volunteer at the farm after finishing my fieldwork for a few months. I enjoyed being around the people and plants and being perfectly honest, going to the farm was something to do. I do not think I was the only one in that boat for with almost every other social outlet closed the farm was one of the few remaining places I could go. For much of 2020, bar the few months where inter-county travel was permitted, the farthest I travelled was the slightly over 5 kilometer journey from my apartment to Feirm Bheag. My contact with my friends at Feirm Beag waned during

the third lockdown which began in December 2020. By this point I had completed my fieldwork and had been busy writing up my dissertation for a number of months. As of writing this addendum I have since been able to return to Feirm Bheag after a lengthy hiatus due to pandemic restrictions however this return has not been as a researcher but rather strictly a volunteer.

This addendum is not here to say anything specific but is here to simply act as a record of some experiences of the pandemic and its effects on the CSA from my perspective. And to this end it has met this requirement. One might question why I leave this section as short as it is and to that I will answer the following. COVID-19 has certainly turned the world on its head and a lot has happened in the last year and a half since the first recorded case of the virus was detected in Ireland. Yet at the same time not a lot has happened at all.

Appendix

a) The list of expanded definitions, taken verbatim from the JOAA, for each of the Teikei Principles:

1. Principle of mutual assistance:

The essence of this partnership lies, not in trading itself, but in the friendly relationship between people. Therefore, both producers and consumers should help each other on the basis of mutual understanding: This relation should be established through the reflection of past experiences. Principle of intended production. Producers should, through consultation with consumers, intend to produce the maximum amount and maximum variety of produce within the capacity of the farms.

2. Principle of intended production:

Producers should, through consultation with consumers, intend to produce the maximum amount and maximum variety of produce within the capacity of the farms.

3. Principle of accepting the produce:

Consumers should accept all the produce that has been grown according to previous consultation between both groups, and their diet should depend as much as possible on this produce.

4. Principle of mutual concession in the price decision:

In deciding the price of the produce, producers should take full account of savings in labor and cost, due to grading and packaging processes being curtailed, as well as of all their produce being accepted; and consumers should take into full account the benefit of getting fresh, safe, and tasty foods.

5. Principle of deepening friendly relationships.

The continuous development of this partnership requires the deepening of friendly relationships between producers and consumers. This will be achieved only through maximizing contact between partners.

6. Principle of self-distribution:

On this principle, the transportation of produce should be carried out by either the producer's or consumer's groups, up to the latter's depots, without dependence on professional transporters.

7. Principle of democratic management:

Both groups should avoid over-reliance upon limited number of leaders in their activities, and try to practice democratic management with responsibility shared by all. The particular conditions of the members' families should be taken into consideration on the principle of mutual assistance.

8. Principle of learning among each group:

Both groups of producers and consumers should attach much importance to studying among themselves, and should try to keep their activities from ending only in the distribution of safe foods.

9. Principle of maintaining the appropriate group scale:

The full practice of the matters written in the above articles will be difficult if the membership or the territory of these groups becomes too large. That is the reason why both of them should be kept to an appropriate size. The development of this movement in terms of membership should be promoted through increasing the number of groups and the collaboration among them.

10. Principle of steady development:

In most cases, neither producers nor consumers will be able to enjoy such good conditions as mentioned above from the very beginning. Therefore, it is necessary for both of them to choose promising partners, even if their present situation is unsatisfactory, and to go ahead with the effort to advance in mutual cooperation.

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