

# **GROWING COMMUNITY FOOD ECONOMIES IN THE PHILIPPINES**

By

**Margaret Ann Hill**

**A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
of the Australian National University.**



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**RESOURCES, ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT  
CRAWFORD SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY  
COLLEGE OF ASIA AND THE PACIFIC  
THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY  
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# Declaration

I, Margaret Ann Hill, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Resources, Environment and Development Group of the Crawford School of Public Policy, College of Asia and the Pacific, The Australian National University, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. This thesis has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institutions.

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# Abstract

This thesis is about collective ethical economic action for a climate and resource changing world. It is a series of re-thinking economy experiments in the food arena based on my research in the Philippines. In the thesis I argue for a new mode of critical inquiry that centres on matters of concern: gathering and assembling economic diversity; human actancy; and human-nonhuman actancy, in order to grow post-capitalist food economies. I also argue for hybrid collective ethics and methods that cultivate new ways of being in the world leading to new economic and food futures. In the empirical chapters I show how urban neighbourhoods in Northern Mindanao and Manila are addressing food economy concerns such as malnutrition, food security, poverty and post-typhoon livelihood rebuilding through collective ethical economic actions. I demonstrate the importance of cultivating enabling political, social and economic environments. The strength and innovation of this thesis is that it employs a collective methodological approach to extend theoretical understanding of collective ethics. Nested in Community Economies Collective scholarship, this research grew out of an action research project on local economic development in the Philippines. The thesis research links various other Philippines-based networks in the fields of agroecology, social enterprise development, local governance and community-based disaster preparedness. My doctoral project enacted community food economies by harnessing these networks and their diverse knowledge practices in an innovative workshop event and through the formation of new hybrid collectives. These collectives include 'actors' as colourfully diverse as municipality mayors, local government workers, landless poor urban communal gardeners, NGO workers, agronomists and sanitation scientists, economic geographers, privately owned vacant land, waste-dump sites, composting toilets, human manure, vegetables, flooding rivers, super typhoons, waste tetra-packs, recycled bamboo, janitor fish and digital media tools. The hybrid collective networks that were formed during the doctoral research have continued beyond the

project. For example, a network of home farmers and gardeners correspond and support one another regularly via Facebook. In times of hardship such as in the wake of Typhoon Haiyan or 'Yolanda' in the Philippines, networks like this one are a lifeline for financial and social support and continued collective practice. This thesis shows that research is a performative act with material affects. Performing hybrid collective methods and ethics offers one way to cultivate new food and economic futures in a climate and resource changing world.

In loving memory of Colin Yallop  
1941-2011

A great man and a brilliant scholar  
who inspired this thesis project and my journey into academia,  
and who demonstrated so graciously  
how to think deeply, love passionately, and live nobly

and for Weereewa  
a place of dreaming past and present



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# Abbreviations

AAG	Association of American Geographers
ABCD	Asset-Based Community Development
AFNs	Alternative food networks
ATC	Alter Trade Corporation
BSEDP	Banaba Social Enterprise Development Project
CEC	Community Economies Collective
CERN	Community Economies Research Network
COPE	Community Organizing Philippines Enterprise
CSA	Community-supported agriculture
GCFE	Growing Community Food Economies
JKGG	J.K. Gibson-Graham
LGU	Local Government Unit
MSAI	Migrant Savings for Alternative Investment
OPF	Opol Food Project
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PUVeP	Peri-Urban Vegetable Project
SEARSOLIN	Southeast Asia Rural Social Leadership Institute
TBtE	Take Back the Economy
TNC	transnational corporation
Unlad	Unlad Kabayan Migrant Services Foundation Incorporated
UP	University of the Philippines
WTO	World Trade Organization
XU-GLI	Xavier University Governance and Leadership Institute



# Introduction

The global food system is becoming increasingly vulnerable and unsustainable. Marked by capitalist agri-business and extended commodity chains, it is heavily dependent on natural resources to fuel production and a stable climate with steady rainfall for regular output. Yet climatic factors are increasingly uncertain and natural resources and supplies of coal and crude oil are seriously depleted. Environments are struggling to survive well under the strain of a system bent on turning broilers into manufactured chicken kiev's and potatoes into french fries. Populations are either over-nourished and obese or under-nourished. There are stark inequalities between the 'haves' and the 'have nots', the 'stuffed' and the 'starved' (Patel 2007). It seems that western food habits, and a predominantly capitalist agri-business food economy, are not able to operate in an ecologically sustainable and economically just way.

We can no longer bury our heads in depleted top soil, without seeing that agricultural lands, environments and ecosystems have been irreparably damaged by destructive farming techniques and chemicals used to generate the food many of us serve at our tables. We can no longer ignore the health concerns western diets exacerbate nor the continuing reality of starvation with one sixth of humanity (around one billion people) hungry and malnourished (United Nations High Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis 2010).

What is to be done? Surely we must confront the end of food as we know it on supermarket shelves, with the same certainty and for many of the same reasons as we must, the end of oil (Roberts 2008). In this thesis I propose to re-think the food economy, placing collective responsibility for others and for the future of earth itself at the centre of

concern. Many people are already engaged in more sustainable and just food systems. I argue that there are different ways forward and much experimenting to be done. I further argue that research has a great deal to contribute to experimentation around building different food futures.

Rather than seeing the demise of our fossil fuel dependent global food system as an end, we can see it as a new beginning, an opportunity to create a new Earth and to create new food economies. We are in a new geological epoch, the Anthropocene, a term used to demarcate a period of time from the Industrial Revolution onwards in which humanity has radically increased its power and effect on the earth's biological, ecological and meteorological systems (Crutzen and Stoermer 2000). We have an opportunity to shift our anthropogenic focus. Our food economies are still a work-in-progress, dependent upon billions and billions of actions taken, some in places and contexts beyond our control, but many, many more in our regions, in our neighbourhoods and in our kitchens (Roberts 2008: 322). I explore what it means to survive well by taking collective ethical economic actions, whereby we learn to make do with less and learn to share more. Working as a collective not just as individuals is important. A combined 'we' accumulates critical mass not as a collection of 'I's', rather through acting like a superorganism. Focusing on the ethical actancy of the 'we' shows how collective subjects can build new food economies. How exactly we acquire ethical know-how and use it to enact new food economies is what this thesis is about. It considers what can be done collectively to address shared food concerns.

I begin by thinking about the food that makes its way to our tables and into our stomachs and by identifying and examining moments of ethical action. These moments are told as stories and I use them to explore how already existing collective subjects are addressing shared food concerns.

## **Stories from my home**

Last night on my plate was a beef steak. I am wondering where it came from. What soil and climate did it grow in? What people, machines, materials and economic transactions were involved in its making? Could the cow have been raised on feed that was grown for export in Ethiopia, for example, while local populations went hungry for lack of grain? I bought my beef from an independent butcher shop in Goulburn, a town 20 minutes drive from my home in Collector, which is a village off the Federal highway that runs between Sydney and Canberra. I'm guessing it was grown within 200 kilometres of the abattoir in Goulburn, from what local farmers have told me, but I'd have to talk more with the butcher to be sure. Accompanying the steak was a chilli tomato jam made by a small independent business in Collector run by my friend Kate. It makes a range of jams and relishes in a commercial kitchen that are sold locally through market stalls and direct from Kate's home. It also produces in bulk in a Sydney-based commercial kitchen for larger clients like Qantas Airways. I ate salad my family grew in our home vegetable garden which is located on a rocky hillside called Mill Hill that got its name from the flour mill that operated there in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.

My partner and I purchased a house and one and three quarter acre block on Mill Hill nine years ago. Since then we have been improving the top soil by composting, mulching and nitrogen fixing with legume crops. We have been experimenting with growing our own food and being semi self-sufficient by preserving and snap freezing vegetables for winter consumption. We have produced crops of vegetables with varying degrees of success, challenged by weather extremes of an inland Australian climate, pests and time constraints. On balance our garden supplies green vegetables, salad and herbs for our family of four, and for relatives and community members through the summer months, and a quarter of our vegetables in a good winter. We often produce too much of one crop and gift or barter the surplus. We also gift or barter surplus eggs from our three hens.

To end my meal I ate a piece of a Dutch almond cake baked by my mother who lives two hours away but often visits, bringing homemade gifts with her. I can't trace the cake ingredients beyond the supermarket where she purchased them in the town of Nowra, New South Wales. But I can trace the cake to other more abstract relations. My mother has baked this particular cake for me a number of times in the last few years because she knows it provides comfort to the soul of a weary thesis writer with young children who has little time to bake! And this particular cake carries childhood memories of food and feasting in Holland with relatives, in conjunction with Sinterklaas, the Dutch tradition of celebrating a version of Christmas on the fifth of December.

For many of us our meals and food choices are born out of an array of economic practices that move us and others involved in making our food, between supermarkets, independent small food producers, home-based kitchen and garden production, neighbourhood trading and other things, that all combined, constitute a diverse food economy. Perhaps this is as it should be and we are more resilient as producers, consumers and ethical actors in the food arena because of this diversity of strategies and practices we have in place. Diversity seems necessary in any food economy and especially in the kind of new food economies I imagine and describe in this thesis.

Yet some food habits seem to be more dominant than others, particularly in the 'developed' world. Supermarket shopping, the purchase of mass-produced manufactured goods, and the proliferation of store owned home brands that are cheap for the customer to buy but costly to the environment to produce, are representative of a set of habits that equate with fossil fuel dependent lifestyles. Another fossil fuel dependent habit that is of particular concern in Collector is the dependence on the car and road freight. As in many small rural places people use their car to get to work, to access services and to buy

groceries. There are good connections to towns and cities by road but minimal public transport available. Groceries are transported to nearby towns and to Canberra and its various large supermarkets by road freight. As crude oil supplies decline, predictions are that fuel and transportation costs will rise across the board and road freight will be restricted. Along with fossil fuel dependent habits, our reliance on staple crops discourages diversity within our food system. Agri-business corporations continue mono-cropping practices to grow wheat, corn, rice and bananas for bottom dollar on increasingly depleted agricultural soils.

How might we begin to imagine different food futures that are less dependent on fossil fuels and mono-cropping? What food habits can we adopt to accommodate the increasing cost of fuel, and to adapt to changes that might be forced upon us in terms of the reduced stocks available in supermarkets? How can we advocate for less mono-cropping by growing more staple crops in our communities? How can we be more proactive? These are the kinds of questions that motivate ethical actions whereby we may cultivate new food habits.

In Collector I have often wondered what it would take to produce our own meat and whether a neighbourhood based economy could be established to do such a thing. I imagine it would be one way to improve the ecological footprint of meat production. I anticipate we would pay higher dollars per piece of meat because of the environmental costs and resources involved in meat production, but that we would learn to eat less. We could start with what we already have and one thing we already have is suitable land. We have a commons called the Collector Bushranger Reserve, 250 acres that was gifted by a pastoralist in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the workers on his large sheep property. The Collector common is maintained by a trust. At present farmers pay a fee to graze their cattle and

sheep on the commons. From one of the local farmers 20 families could purchase 20 steers, one per household. We could graze the livestock using rotational grazing methods which enhance soil and grassland regeneration. After 12 months we could send the livestock to the abattoir and on to a butcher in Goulburn who would then re-distribute the meat back to each household without additional packaging and by-passing other actors such as supermarkets, in the food chain. Other communities in our region have already successfully raised livestock for households following a similar model. Gundaroo near Canberra is one example. It wouldn't take much to grow meat in Collector and along with it, enough vegetables to feed our village of 400 people.

At the weekly yoga class held in the community hall my friend Kate, I and others including innovative farmers, regularly discuss our imaginings of a different food future for Collector. The weekly yoga gathering is already a space of ethical action. The farmers, foodies and other regional citizens who attend Collector yoga describe it as a lifeline that helps them cope with the stress of long working days on their farms and elsewhere. Class participants feel the teacher undercharges and they are looking for other ways to remunerate her labour. She is often given eggs and vegetables not as payment in kind, but in addition to monetary payment. The gifting of local produce to supplement cash payment in order to more adequately value the role the yoga teacher plays in supporting the well-being of class participants, is an example of an ethical economic practice.

The yoga class gathering also exchanges and re-distributes goods. Recently after a class a few participants walked down to Kate's garden for inspiration and motivation to keep going with our food growing efforts. We dug up various food plants for transplanting, some of which went to my house and some to a nearby farm with plentiful sheep manure. Eggs from my hens and sheep manure from the farm were dropped off at Kate's a few

days later in exchange. Re-distributing what we don't need for our own survival and supporting the well-being of others through contributing to their food growing practices is another example of an ethical economic practice.

What this one instance shows is that essentially we already practice a neighbourhood food economy that involves numerous ethical economic actions. We do it to some extent habitually and in a spontaneous way. Our efforts are purposefully experimental, opportunistic and somewhat unpredictable. We are making things up as we go along and as we learn and re-learn what it means to be resourceful, adaptive and resilient in a climate and resource changing world. In order to maintain and grow our efforts to have a regionally-based self-sufficient food economy we need to cultivate on-going collective ethical economic actions around local food concerns.

In the Collector example people are at an advantage. They have access to land and resources and opportunities for knowledge and skills sharing. In a rural region of Australia that already leads the way in farming innovation, it is a privilege to experiment. Elsewhere, populations face significant challenges and immediate threats to their everyday existence. What does it mean to create new food futures in a context where poverty and disaster are prevalent, where people are food insecure through economic marginalisation and recurrent freak weather events?

For various reasons I have had the opportunity to do research with urban neighbourhoods in the Republic of the Philippines (hereafter referred to as the Philippines), who are experimenting with the very issues I have described in my home context. I have been working with lay-researchers and others to conceptualise and enact new food futures.

## **Stories from the Philippines**

My first meal in the Philippines was a cheese and tuna melt and a mango smoothie. I was weary after my flight from Australia and a hectic taxi ride across Metro Manila. I had scanned the menu of The University of the Philippines (UP) Hotel cafeteria for want of a light snack before sleep. At the time the tuna melt seemed the best option! I remember my surprise at how many processed ingredients there were in my meal. The bread was manufactured from bleached wheat flour and laden with sugar. The cheese was the processed kind that doesn't require refrigeration. The smoothie tasted like it was made with sweetened condensed milk out of a can and ultra-heat treated long life milk sold in tetra-packs. I can't trace any of these 'foods' and their packaging back through the chains that produced them without doing research. I wonder how many of the economic transactions involved in making my meal actually took place in the Philippines? Was the mango, one of the only fresh ingredients, sourced locally? Were the farmers paid well for their labour?

This meal is not exactly what I would call Filipino food. But then these days I am not sure what is. I worked my way through the UP cafeteria menu over the duration of my stay. The meals on offer were definitely skewed away from vegetable-based dishes and fresh foods. The menu favoured meat-based dishes and processed foods. I noticed for example, that Beefsteak Tagalog and tinned corned beef were popular choices amongst Filipino guests. From my UP dining experiences I have the impression that consuming meat products and processed foods has become an everyday food habit, at least amongst Filipinos that can afford them. Admittedly the UP meal is only one snapshot. But I have observed the same meal choices elsewhere. I think the UP dining experience does reflect a general trend in the Philippines toward adopting western food habits. What stood out for me was how easily habits associated with fossil fuels and mono-cropping had taken hold in the Philippines as important markers of development and economic progress.

Another vivid first impression I have is of the towering billboards near Manila airport that advertise instant noodles and other packaged foods. I had seen them on my taxi ride to the UP Hotel. I remember thinking that the consumers in the advertisements looked stylish and happy. It was as though the instant noodle cup had changed their lives for the better.

I have since come to understand that some people in the Philippines perceive (and are told) they are better off living on westernised, packaged, convenience foods. This thinking is problematic for various reasons. Packaged noodles, pasta and snacks sold in the Philippines are far more expensive than rice and vegetables. For the average Filipino household, purchasing packaged foods puts additional strain on a family income needed for education and medical expenses. There are also health concerns. At least six varieties of Korean noodles were recalled in November 2012 because they were found to contain the cancer-causing ingredient benzopyrene. Cancer scares aside; the nutrition content of most packaged products is poor by comparison to raw foods.

For some Filipinos, consuming western foods is part of what it means to 'move up' in the world. People leave rural areas to escape agrarian toil. In their search for a 'better life' in urban centres and abroad the noodle cup symbolises leaving peasant and poverty stricken ways behind. Pouring boiling water into a polystyrene cup and adding pork or chicken flavourings is a sign of progress and development because the consumer no longer has to labour in the fields or garden to produce their own food. But what is the cost of this 'progress'? What is at stake is the loss of traditional knowledge about growing food. It is being lost in the Philippines through people migrating away from rural areas and through negative perceptions of food growing agroecological practices that may make it undesirable and unimportant to pass on knowledge and practice to others. The promise of progress

and the hope of becoming the happy stylish consumers like the billboard models may prevent people from seeing other possible ways forward.

Another challenge is that many national policy makers, local governments and NGO activists argue that the best way to grow food economies in the Philippines is through export-orientated agribusiness. Export agendas inevitably favour corporations and extended commodity chains over experimental neighbourhood-based efforts to grow food for local markets. Growing food is promoted by governments as a survival strategy and as a way to alleviate poverty, but not necessarily as an enterprising activity that can produce a different food economy. Neighbourhood and regional food growing efforts ought to be taken seriously as key elements of a diverse food economy. Adopting food habits that align with a homogenous and vulnerable capitalist food economy is not the only way forward.

Many people in the Philippines are already enacting diverse or post-capitalist food futures. I use the term 'community food economy' in the thesis to refer to particular clusters of food practices and food enterprises that have been established through collective ethical economic action.

In one case a local government has played a key role in enabling a community food economy to develop. They have used various strategies to cultivate collective ethics around food concerns, such as how to reduce malnutrition among the poor. One strategy is the use of a traditional song called *Bahay Kubo* to motivate poor households to grow a diversity of vegetables and proteins around their houses.

*Bahay Kubo*

*Nipa* Hut Children's Song

Nipa hut, even though it is small

The plants it houses are varied

Turnip and eggplant, winged bean and peanut

String bean, hyacinth bean, lima bean.

Wax gourd, luffa, white squash and pumpkin,

And there is also radish, mustard,

Onion, tomato, garlic, and ginger

And all around are sesame seeds.

*Bahay Kubo* describes a set of food growing habits associated with life in a traditional Filipino house characterised by the roof made from thatched *nipa* palm leaves. The song depicts a diversity of vegetables and plant proteins purposefully grown for human consumption. Even though the house and garden are small they can produce an abundance of food. Small is not portrayed in the song as a limitation rather as an opportunity for diversity to flourish.

The garden in the song is home to various types of beans, peanuts and sesame seeds. They are low cost healthy vegetarian protein sources fit for human consumption. Planting beans and peanuts also improves the soil because they are nitrogen fixing legumes. The healthy soil is able to produce proteins and vegetables for human consumption more effectively because it is being cared for. Many people in the Philippines are taking seriously the charter of growing the diversity of foods in the song. In doing so they are promoting the health of

humans and of the Earth itself. Adopting diverse planting practices is an ethical economic action that places humans and nonhumans such as the nitrogen fixing plants and healthy soil, in alignment.

The song is in circulation. It is spoken and recited by people who are illiterate and it is sung by children in local schools. It is passed on to children by adults who see the importance of handing down traditional knowledge about growing food. Through the song, food growing ideas travel and lead to new practice. The gifting and re-distributing of food growing knowledge and practice is ethical action that encourages humans to contribute directly to the well-being of others.

The lay-researcher and municipal agricultural technician who began to use *Babay Kubo* in his local government area explained to me that in the Philippines when people see something working well they are motivated to replicate it elsewhere. As part of his work he gathers household gardeners together in public spaces, such as vacant lots turned into communal gardens, and he runs free gardening training sessions. He uses the song as an education tool to highlight that backyard self-sufficiency is possible. He travels to various urban and rural neighbourhoods in his local government area. He speaks about the merits of growing food in backyards and neighbourhoods everywhere. The song and the food growing practices circulate widely because of the role he plays as a lay-researcher. Research and education that gifts and re-distributes food growing knowledge and practice is ethical action that contributes directly to the well-being of whole neighbourhoods.

In this example the municipal government takes an experimental research approach and enrolls itself in gardening practice alongside others. Training and troubleshooting sessions are not the only things on offer. Municipal agricultural technicians readily try their hand at

new things working together with gardeners to improve and grow practices. They make products out of waste materials and trial new composting and mulching techniques. Government workers invite farmers and food co-operatives to talk with them and gardeners about how they can all work together in more intentional ways. They are open to learning and doing things in new ways. They create a culture of working things out together as they go along. The research process the municipal government has adopted is itself a form of ethical action that creates and maintains habits of co-learning and co-production of knowledge and practice in food gardens.

In this case the government has acted as a catalyst. It has understood how ideas travel and lead to new practice in the Philippines and harnessed that to encourage a different food future that is rekindling traditional food growing practices. It has also paid serious attention to local food concerns such as malnutrition and post-disaster livelihood re-building. It has encouraged collective action and a sharing of food growing spaces and resources. In the wake of recent extreme weather events it has played a key role in helping people collectively mobilise assets to rebuild their neighbourhoods as well as provide for immediate food needs.

Both in the stories from the Philippines and the stories from my home, neighbourhoods are enacting different food futures through ethical actions. Despite the challenges of dominant food habits that align with a capitalist economy, in both contexts we see snapshots of other possible ways forward. We see the potential to develop clusters of integrated food growing practices and enterprises. Ethical actions are at the centre. They become habitual over time when we learn how to make them part of our everyday practice. Learning new ethical habits needed to grow community food economies is not something individuals can do alone. Rather, they acquire this ethical know-how by working and acting

together. People, plants, weather events, waste materials, soil and local governments contribute in their own way to generating ethical action that enrolls more than the individual subject.

Both stories are examples of an ethical re-centring of food economies around two key ideas. One idea is about habitual ethical economic action, moving away from thinking about ethics as only about deliberate decision making. The other idea is of action by a collective subject, moving away from thinking about the ethical economic subject as necessarily human and necessarily individual.

### **Thesis outline**

In Chapter One I outline my research methods and demonstrate an experimental mode of collective ethical research practice for transforming economies in a climate and resource changing world. I situate my thesis within a specific re-thinking economy project, namely The Community Economies Collective (CEC). I elaborate on the CEC as a thinking project and as a researching in-common experiment. I focus specifically on the CEC theorisation of ethics and the implications that has for understanding economic and ecological agency. I demonstrate how my doctoral research is pushing community economies research along through re-thinking what constitutes ethical economic action and agency in a post-development context. I argue for the becoming of community economies through habitual collective ethical action. I also argue that both in the world at large and within the CEC itself, people are learning what it means to be part of collective subjects and more-than-subjects and they are learning what it means to construct community economies in the Anthropocene through human-nonhuman collective ethical actions.

In Chapter Two I examine the role the academic researcher plays in portraying food economies in scholarship. I argue for a move away from critique where a capitalist food economy is centre stage. I examine a new mode of critical inquiry in food scholarship that is less about articulating facts and more about gathering concerns. In this new mode being a critical scholar is about being a gatherer of people and things that act collectively around shared concerns. Critical inquiry is shown to be a useful tool for gathering and assembling diversity, human actancy and human-nonhuman actancy to grow post-capitalist food futures.

In Chapter Three I demonstrate critical inquiry and CEC thinking and methods. I give a practical explanation of a method that is more about gathering and assembling diversity to build new food futures and less about research as a vehicle for promoting homogenous one size fits all economic growth trajectories. I elaborate on the research methods that were used in a practical workshop that began my doctoral project. In this research event a hybrid collective of academic and lay researchers, scientists and social scientists and human and nonhuman actants such as allotment gardeners and communal vegetable gardens, worked together to enact food economies as diverse economies. This collective produced a new knowledge commons about how to grow food economies in the Philippines. And these understandings had direct implications for the research I conducted after the workshop event.

In this thesis I provide empirical cases, where hybrid collectives have acted with varying degrees of ‘success’ in growing local and regional food economies. Success can of course be measured in different ways. My usage is in reference to an urban food intervention that generates an on-going community food economy in which an assemblage of various actors with shared economic food concerns enact ethical habits and communal ‘readiness for

action' (Varela 1999). Following Latour I consider hybrid collectives as conglomerates of human and nonhuman actors and the conduit that binds actors together in such ways that ethical action becomes the property or attribute of the conglomerate or assemblage, rather than the individual parts (Latour 2007: 44).

Chapter Four begins with a discussion of the ethical decision making of individual economic subjects. I reveal how individual subjects in one urban food economy in the Philippines act in ways that are not necessarily about ethical deliberation but about ethical habits. How ethical habits form is one consideration in this chapter. Another is the kinds of environments that enable ethical habits to accumulate across neighbourhoods. In this first case I examine some of the challenges that arise when urban food growing efforts do not accumulate and sustain collective ethical action. Furthermore I begin a thread that runs through subsequent chapters about the role research and hybrid collectives can play in cultivating ethical readiness for action such that when sudden changes in circumstances occur, neighbourhoods are better equipped to work together and to maintain their efforts to enact new food futures.

In Chapter Five I analyse a second urban food economy. In this case a local government takes the lead. It enacts new food futures by forming a hybrid collective of researchers, lay-researchers and others. The hybrid collective creates an enabling environment that motivates wide-spread habitual ethical actions. In this case ethical actions produce a cluster of interdependent economic practices around malnutrition and food security concerns. Through analysis of this cluster I reveal how neighbourhood-wide ethical habits produce a different kind of economic subject, a human-human collective subject that acts as an ethical superorganism. Here I am moving away from thinking about the ethical economic

subject as necessarily individual. I show how the ethical actions of collective human subjects generate a communal ethics of care and a community food economy.

In Chapter Six non-government organisations take the lead in enacting new food futures. They gather a hybrid collective in a typhoon prone neighbourhood. The collective includes nonhuman actants such as flooding river systems and typhoons. In this case the ethical actions derived from hybrid collective effort generate a cluster of interdependent economic enterprises. Here I move away from thinking about the ethical economic subject as necessarily human. Through analysis of hybrid collective habits in the enterprise cluster, I imagine and experiment with a space of ethical action outside of the human subject and the more-than-subject. I examine ways in which a human-nonhuman collective subject acts as an ethical superorganism. Further I suggest how human-nonhuman collective subjects can grow a community food economy and a communal ethics of care for natural and human systems.

### **Summary statement**

This thesis is a series of re-thinking economy experiments in the food arena of the Philippines some of which are story based, some theoretical, and others empirical. In the thesis I argue for growing new food economies through habitual collective ethical action. I also argue that academic and lay researchers have a key role to play as enablers that foster the ability of people and things to gather around concerns. In the empirical chapters I show how urban neighbourhoods in the Philippines are addressing food economy concerns such as malnutrition, food security, poverty and post typhoon livelihood rebuilding through collective ethical economic actions and I demonstrate the role of hybrid collectives in cultivating enabling environments for collective ethical action. In the more theoretical chapters I argue for a new mode of critical inquiry that centres on matters of

concern in the Anthropocene: gathering and assembling economic diversity; human actancy; and human-nonhuman actancy in order to grow post-capitalist food economies. I also argue for hybrid collective ethics and methods as one way to cultivate new ways of being in the world and new economic and food futures.

