A Solidarity (Food) Purchase Group in Cape Town

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Declaration

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature: Signed by candidate Date: 27 February 2021

Abstract

For the past thirty years, food producers and consumers have initiated alternative food networks (AFNs) because of the perception that the globalising agrifood system is unsustainable, untrustworthy, and untransparent. These alternative strategies for food production and distribution are perceived to be rooted in sustainable, socially-embedded principles. In more recent years, solidarity purchase groups (SPGs) have formed as a distinct type of AFN collaboration that facilitates higher levels of relationships of regard and reciprocity between consumers and producers. The literature of AFNs has largely focussed on AFNs in the global North. There has been far less research focussed on the nature of AFNs in the global South. This research project was undertaken to write a history of an SPG in the global South, in Cape Town, South Africa: The Good Food Club (GFC). The development of the GFC was examined within the context of the global literature on AFNs. Key actors in the GFC, suppliers and members, were interviewed to describe their participation and to discuss the motivations driving their involvement in the GFC. The research explored their values around food production and distribution, and the ways their values have developed or changed over the time of their GFC involvement. Through increased exposure to the food system realities, members have grown in their consciousness as consumers. Members and suppliers expressed desire for connection with each other, for increased embodied knowledge. Members do not believe they will find this this knowledge and connection in the country's corporate retailers. Finally, this research comments the GFC developing similarly to AFNs of the global North, and its consequent limitations as a strategy for the common good of Cape Town.

Acknowledgments

This research project was born out of my passion for food system activism. It's an honour I don't carry lightly that I was able to devote time and resources to this work. I began this research project as a naïve, on-the-ground alternative food network activist, with little exposure to the academic research underpinning this field. Therefore, I'm grateful that I could be supervised by an academic of the first order, a woman whose applied academics in food security I admire and respect. How fortunate I was that Jane Battersby was willing to guide me in this endeavour. Jo Hunter, my co-supervisor, was also ever-present with wise guidance and support. This world of alternative food networks is complex. They helped me steer clear of the traps of over-simplifying my analysis, and for that I owe them both much gratitude. I know that my future activism will be the stronger and more grounded because of their influence.

Who could know that the world would collectively live through a pandemic and lockdowns, and that in the writing phase of this project my own family members would become sick with COVID? Sometimes I didn't know which way the weathervane was pointing. My family kept me rooted and motivated, even when it seemed progress was at a standstill. My wonderful, cheerleading husband, Craig, has been present and integral to my food journey -- from my work with the food network, to this research project. Our three teenagers and young adults also supported me all along, picking up the slack for me on the household chores schedule at critical times in this process. The long months of graft were made much lighter by their presence and cheerful 'background noise'.

My heart-felt thanks must also be expressed to UCT for allowing me to do this research, and specifically to the Postgraduate Funding Office for their funding support.

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

AFN - Alternative food network

CSA - Community-supported agriculture

FCN - Food community network

GAS - *Gruppi du acquisto solidale* [Italian for solidarity purchase groups]

GFC - Good Food Club

MFC - Mainstream food chain

NCD - Non-communicable diseases

RCC – Responsible consumption community

SFSC - Short food supply-chain

SPG - Solidarity purchase group

Glossary

Agrifood system:	The activities, actors and institutions who grow, process, distribute, acquire, consume, and dispose of food and how they interact with other systems and actors, and the outcomes of these activities contributing to food security. (Battersby et al., 2015)
Alternative food system (AFN):	The organisation of supply chains that are positioned outside conventional food networks, regarded as being based on more sustainable principles than conventional food networks.
Convener:	The person who facilitates the purchasing activities of their GFC.
Conventional food network:	The food supply system that is linked to large-scale, productivist agriculture and supermarket retail, and the highly industrialised supply chain associated with industrialised, large-scale production and consumption. (Abrahams, 2006)
Intermediary:	A business that the GFC purchases from that is not the primary producer of the goods they supply.
Mainstream food chain (MFC):	The conventional distribution channel of food products. (Migliore et al., 2013)
Member:	A consumer that regularly purchases goods through a specific GFC.
Producer:	A person or company that makes or grows the goods it sells to the GFC.
Supplier:	A person or company that supplies goods to the GFC. The business can be a producer or an intermediary.
Wholesaler:	A person or company that is an intermediary, buying goods and then selling to the GFC in large quantities.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 New beginnings with food

In 2007, in Cape Town, South Africa, I began food provisioning activities as part of an informal collective of consumers. Over time, we became a purchase group called the Good Food Club (GFC). We began our collective purchases for similar reasons, albeit unconsciously, and our growth and structures developed in similar forms to alternative food networks (AFNs) in the global North (Abrahams, 2006).

To access wholesale pricing tiers, we organised to bulk buy a few food items from producers and supplier intermediaries. We enjoyed the benefits of buying good quality food at better prices than we'd be able to buy similar food at supermarkets.

More consumers joined in our group purchases, and as we expanded this scheme we had formed to include other foods, one of our members joined me as co-organiser so we could lead these food purchasing activities with more intentionality. We structured our purchasing activities around monthly collections from a centralised point. Eventually, we grew to be a closed group of 75 households buying food together from small farms and suppliers.

Our interactions with suppliers (whether actual producers or intermediaries) gave us the sense of moving closer to the makers of the food we ate in our homes (Papaoikonomou & Ginieis, 2017), catalysing a journey of understanding our food differently, asking questions which led to more questions, on repeat. Little did we know we were interacting with a complexity of factors to consider when lay consumers decide to buy 'ethical food' (Hinrichs & Allen, 2008). The interactions we had with suppliers and with each other led us to asking questions about which values should guide our purchases.

We noticed the country's food supply was dominated by corporate retailers at every step in the value chain—from farmers, to the processors, to the supermarkets. Farmers were being squeezed for low prices, consumers were paying high prices, but corporate retailers and processors were profiting well (Ledger, 2016). Simultaneously, we began to understand the barriers in place between half of the population and an adequate, nutritious diet, because they were too cash-poor to buy food at prices that were too high (Joubert, 2012).

As our group grew in members and suppliers, we began to understand our collective provisioning as an alternative to the corporate agrifood system, which we believed to be irreparable (Fonte & Cucco, 2017). We saw that, by combining our monthly purchases, we could choose which suppliers we wished to give our financial support to, creating supply pathways for other groups to follow.

More groups formed to access these supply chains in the same way. There are now eleven groups working together as a network around greater Cape Town and surroundings,[1] with the promise of more groups in the pipeline.

1.1.1 Emergence of a solidarity purchase group in Cape Town

Reflecting the understanding that we could collectively better wield our buying power as conscious consumers, our values widened and deepened, driving our motivation to support a more just food system (Fonte, 2013). With this shift to systemic concerns motivating our purchases, we identified ourselves as ‘solidarity purchase groups’ (SPGs)[2] working together as a network (Corsi & Novelli, 2016; Grasseni, 2014; Schifani & Migliore, 2011). This network, even in its early stages, began providing social connections from which to mentor new SPGs, imparting vision, values, producer information, and logistical and technological expertise (Migliore et al., 2013).

As each new SPG brought more households into this AFN, a parallel food system more equitable for suppliers and consumers seemed possible to us. However, is a more just local system of food supply possible, or are these the free-range dreams of organic locavores in the suburbs of Cape Town? These are questions I considered, which ultimately led me to starting this research project.

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[1] One of the eleven groups is based in Stellenbosch, a town 50 km from central Cape Town.
[2] Solidarity Purchase Groups (SPG) are a particular form of AFN. SPG are described and discussed in Chapter 2.

1.2 This research project

1.2.1 Research aim

AFNs have formed in response to the perceived inadequacies of the world's industrialising and globalising food systems (Duncan & Pascucci, 2017; Wiskerke, 2009). These AFNs largely are set in Europe and North America (Abrahams, 2006; Haysom, 2016). There is a wide body of literature describing and analysing these activities. During the past decade, further research has focused upon observing the social phenomenon of SPG in Italy as a particular form of AFN aiming to build a more just food system (Grasseni, 2014).

This research project, "A Solidarity (Food) Purchase Group in Cape Town", intended to study the GFC as a food provisioning strategy for the common good (Brueggemann, 2010). As a key actor still intrinsically involved in the GFC, I'm a contributor to the telling of this history.[3]

The aim of this research was two-fold: (1) To produce a history of the GFC, its formation and development, describing its beginning as a purchase group, and its gradual transformation into a SPG within a budding solidarity food network (SFN) in Cape Town; (2) To examine perceived or observed values driving member and supplier participation, including any shifts in these values that have come from their GFC supply interactions.

The objectives were:

- to explore perceptions of the quality of social connection between its producers ('suppliers') and consumers ('members'), and between GFC members themselves;
- to describe its beginning as a purchase group, and then examine motivations for participating that indicate re-defining itself as a SPG, informed by research about SPGs in Italy;[4]

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[3] This is especially important in capturing the first years of the GFC history, since the co-founder had not yet joined me in organising our group purchases.
[4] Specifically, the social phenomenon of the *Gruppi du acquisto solidale (GAS)*.

- to understand what the contributors are to the development, deepening or changing values in members that move beyond personal benefit, to participating in a food economy that supports the common good;
- to reflect on how the GFC's evolution confirms or challenges emergent themes in the AFN literature.

Finally, this research will comment on whether the GFC can be described as a food provisioning strategy for the ‘common good’ (Brueggemann, 2010).

1.2.2 Research format

To capture a historical narrative of the GFC that could include attitudes and opinions about food activity and any values motivating food purchases, GFC members, suppliers and the co-founder were interviewed using the format of semi-structured interviews. To add detail to the history, historical information and data were extracted from GFC primary sources (communications and purchasing activity from GFC records).

The history of the GFC in Chapter 4 was written using a posture of auto-ethnography, given that I, the researcher, was one of its key informants as a founder member. When researching the human contributors of our food supply, participant observation enables us to “engage ourselves and our readers in not only gaining knowledge but also empathy and care for unknown others whose lives are bound into the food we buy and eat” (Cook, 2006, p. 660). With further credit to Ian Cook, food has an ‘emotional geography’ that needs exploration and description. On this basis it’s appropriate that I am the narrator of my research (Cook, 2006). My participant voice has contributed texture to the thesis, even as my own perspectives and ‘bent’ are woven into the findings and analysis.

While the interviews followed a set guide—albeit allowing for and even encouraging conversation to flow out of those set questions—my approach to analysing the data was more inductive. I coded themes using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The resulting narrative and findings reflect on the themes expressed by both members and suppliers, juxtaposing places of similarities and reflecting on implications for the food system and SPGs.

1.2.3 Conclusion

In the pursuit of the research aims and objectives, I will examine the GFC as an AFN within its local and global context. As I describe its development, I will discuss the literature describing AFNs within the global food system, with specific attention given to the descriptions of SPGs in Italy. Given that I describe the GFC as an SPG in Cape Town, South Africa, I will also examine how it has developed in response to its local context.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The last twenty years have seen a growing body of research about AFNs around the world. These networks, in their varied forms and manifestations, are positioned as offering consumers food provisioning strategies alternate to the mainstream food chain (MFC).[5] In this way, the development of the GFC as an AFN in Cape Town, South Africa, is not a unique happenstance. Therefore, this review looks at key features of the MFC, then at AFN activities as counter movements—first globally, and then in South Africa.

The review begins with a general discussion about the core ideologies of the global growth economy, and then questions whether an economy that works for the common good could be freshly imagined (Brueggemann, 2010).

The global food economy is described within a corporate-led food regime (Greenberg, 2017; McMichael, 2009a), its key drivers giving power to corporate actors. AFNs are then described and discussed as counter movements, although it should be noted that the literature on AFNs focuses on theory and activities in the global North. I discuss newer schemes called food community networks (FCNs) as distinct developments within the AFNs, of which solidarity purchase groups (SPGs) are a specific form. Focus is given to SPGs as a social phenomenon because of their commonalities with the GFC.

Moving to the local context of this research, corporate dominance of the South African agrifood system is discussed as a consequence of global pressures and South Africa's own unique conditions. There is little written about AFNs in the global South, but this review concludes with a description of how they are framed differently than those of the North.

[5] Migliore et al. define the MFC as "the conventional distribution channel of food products" (Migliore et al., 2013, p. 550) .

2.2 Global economy

2.2.1 Global growth economy

We live and eat within a neo-liberal[6] world governed more by economic structures and rules around us than by any other system (Fioramonti, 2017). From World War II to the beginning of this century, the focus of most nation-states has been to promote economic growth measured by gross domestic product (GDP). Any increase in GDP was considered the same as development, with the assumption that with any increase in growth-based development there would be repercussive wellbeing for that society.

Consumption of goods and services is the engine driving this global 'growth economy' (Fioramonti, 2017), and the market is the arena in the global competition for growth. To increase company profits, every sector of the economy applies economies of scale to attain the highest levels of production. This has accelerated industrialisation and modernisation of production and distribution processes (Wiskerke, 2009). Longer supply chains move components and goods across regions and borders, creating the need for additional intermediaries in economic systems. In the growth economy, the informal economy of the world isn't calculated into GDP (Fioramonti, 2017, p. 34).

Christian theologian Walter Brueggemann (2010) describes this extractive global system as one that produces wealth, but also "produces anxiety that affects every dimension of the system" (p. 4). The fear of scarcity drives this market system, and exploitation of resources becomes necessary to hold the system in place. It delineates people into 'consumers' and 'producers'. Some need to be the producers, but every person has the job of consuming to keep the wheels of this growth economy turning. According to Fioramonti (2017), our primary identity is as consumer, replacing understanding of ourselves foremost as citizens. In this system, the consumer has become an "economic abstraction" (Watts et al., 2005, p. 26).

[6] According to Greenberg (2017, p. 3), neo-liberalism is defined by "processes of privatisation, trade liberalisation, state deregulation and corporate self-regulation." He maintains that these processes differ in every country, "based on unique histories, levels of capitalist development and integration, and existing institutions and relations of power."

Within this literature, the growth economy is argued to not have not lived up to its promises of wellbeing for the common good in any measurable way. GDP as a tool of economic measure "neglects all human, social and environmental impacts" (Fioramonti, 2017, p. 22). While corporations race to log larger profits on their balance sheets, they don't account for all the costs to doing business—costs such as environmental degradations that outlive the business pursuits that caused them, health costs of producing or consuming goods when they are not healthy or safe for our bodies, and social disequilibrium caused by disconnection and distrust between producers and consumers (Kloppenburg et al., 1996). These costs often aren't confined to the country of their origin, because our world's resources don't hold to the same borders drawn by human beings.

It is argued that by many measures of wellbeing, and even by measures of economic performance, the dominant economic system governing our world is unsustainable (Fioramonti, 2016). When using Forssell and Lankoski's (2014, p. 64) definition of sustainability as economic, social, and environmental dimensions held in balance, the signs are all too clear that massive change is needed. The unquestioned belief that potential growth of the market is infinite is no longer fully supported, and neither is the belief that the market will correct imbalances and fix society's ills. It's clear that growth-based economics has come with devastating environmental, economic, and social consequences.

2.2.2 An economy organised for the common good

According to Fioramonti (2017), the term 'economy' is "another word for social organisation" (p. 212). Is it possible to reorganise socially the constituent parts of the current economy to work for the common good? Brueggemann (2010) would say it's not possible, and would have people "depart" from this current system altogether, and construct new systems in which neighbourhoods, not financial markets, demarcate social ordering, and whereby people understand themselves first as neighbours, not as consumer/producers (p. 102).

In his book Journey to the Common Good, Brueggemann (2010) states, "We speak of symptoms and consequences, but we do not name and identify the core ideology that produces our social disability" (p. 29). Brueggemann is an academic theologian of the Christian tradition. His work, and this book specifically, frame my faith-rooted food activism within the GFC, the AFN upon which I focus this research. He describes the practice of neighbourhood as “a covenantal commitment to the common good” (p. 30). The practice of neighbourhood has us understand that our individual wellbeing is inextricably linked to society’s common good. Ledger (2016) supports this: “Thinking of ourselves only, or foremost, as individuals ‘apart’ from those around us, is fundamentally opposed” to an ethic of care, or the work of neighbourhood (p. 180). Brueggemann (2010) calls for the creation of alternative systems based on abundance. When supply transactions become more socially-embedded, the basis of relationships between producers and consumers can move from being purely economic to also being human (Ledger, 2016).

Brueggemann (2010) argues that the work of neighbourhood requires us to define progress in ways that measure and reflect what truly is good for the common good of all people. Progress can be reframed with sustainability as an implicit value and the wellbeing of all people as its aim.

2.3 Global food system overview

The supply and distribution of food is as much subject to the global forces of the growth economy as any other commodity. This section provides an overview of the global agrifood system.

2.3.1 Corporate agrifood system

Within the economic systems of the world, the agrifood system refers to:

> (i) the activities, actors and institutions who grow, process, distribute, acquire, consume and dispose of food and how they interact with other systems and actors, and (ii) the outcomes of these activities contributing to food security. (Adapted from Roberts 2001, Ericksen 2007, and MacRae 2013) (Battersby et al., 2015, p. 11)

According to Greenberg:

> The concept can be applied on any scale, from local food systems (Feagan, 2007) to global agro-food regimes (Friedmann & McMichael, 1989). (Greenberg, 2015, p. 7)

The food systems of our world are shifting dramatically, the magnitude such that Reardon and Timmer (2012) call it a ‘food system revolution’, and McMichael (2009b) named this era the 'corporate food regime'.[7] Greenberg (2017) has applied a helpful addition, calling it the 'corporate-*led* food regime' [emphasis mine]. In this regime, "the organising principle is the market" not the state (Haysom, 2016, p. 6), and national regulation favours the interests of corporations (Greenberg, 2017). The dominance of corporate interests is noted "both materially and in the ways in which the food system is understood and discussed" (Greenberg, 2017, p. 1). The drivers of this transition are agrifood and supermarket corporations (Haysom, 2016). This assertion is supported by research by Reardon et al. (2003); Reardon and Minten (2011); Crush and Frayne (2011).

Characteristics of this regime are state deregulation and corporate self-regulation (Greenberg, 2017), industrialised and intensified production methods (Bauler et al., 2011; Born & Purcell, 2006), privatisation (Greenberg, 2017), and the capitalisation of all segments of food industry—production, supply chains and markets (Born & Purcell, 2006). This "delocalisation of food" results in long, even globalised, supply chains in which intermediary corporates profit the most in the value chains (Bauler et al., 2011, p. 32).

Reardon and Timmer (2012) describe two additional characteristics of this food transition as the development of modernised procurement strategies and widespread consolidation. This consolidation began in the middle of the last century in North America and Europe; it began in the 1990s in so-called developing countries, but the transition has occurred more quickly there (Greenberg, 2017; Haysom, 2016; Reardon & Timmer, 2012). So pervasive has been the consolidation in the developing world's retail segment it's sometimes called a 'supermarket revolution' (Weatherspoon & Reardon, 2003) or the era of 'Big Food' (Igumbor et al., 2012).[8] The market imperative to move more food more quickly from producer to consumer drove food retailers to upsize, channelling food through an organised system of primarily large distributors. The modernisation of procurement systems enables corporates to leverage economies of scale and efficiently coordinate supply chains for maximum profits (Reardon & Timmer, 2012).

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[7] McMichael applies Harriet Friedmann's (1989) 'food regime' concept as a frame "to explain the strategic role of agriculture and food in the construction of the world capitalist economy (McMichael, 2009b, p. 139)."

[8] 'Big Food' describes corporations that dominate the food industry, especially manufacturers, retailers and food outlets - but not agribusiness or primary processors (Igumbor et al., 2012).

2.3.2 Impacts

The sustainability (or lack thereof) of the dominant food system can be discussed in terms of economic, social or environmental impact (Forssell & Lankoski, 2014; Hankins & Grasseni, 2014; Sonnino, 2016; Wiskerke, 2009). This mainstream food chain (MFC) has had some seemingly positive results for consumers, such as lower food prices (Demartini et al., 2017; Wiskerke, 2009) and better access to food (Migliore et al., 2013).

However, longer supply chains generally result in less favourable trading terms for farmers, leading to negative social consequences for rural areas (De Fazio, 2016). Corporate retailers push economies of scale, which drive larger farming businesses, making economic conditions more difficult for small farms to survive (Yacamán Ochoa et al., 2019). They also adversely affect smaller retail businesses (Strydom, 2015). Supermarkets take business away from smaller retail competition,[9] and they often "grow at the expense of the informal economy" (Jackson, 2010, p. 19).

Concerns about adverse environmental impact of the current MFC are widely noted in the literature regarding "the use of resources and with pollution and damage to the soil, water, and air (including greenhouse gas emissions), biodiversity and ecosystems, packaging waste, and animal welfare" (Forssell & Lankoski, 2014, p. 65; Wiskerke, 2009). Intensive agribusiness practices are driven toward profit at the cost of soil and ecological wellbeing (Sage, 2007).

Social impact refers to health, wellbeing, social connectedness, cultural agency, and food security of producers, workers and consumers (Forssell & Lankoski, 2014; Grasseni, 2013). There has been much analysis of the MFC's negative social impacts, but perhaps the most notable for this research are the health impacts. It is widely held that areas of the world are undergoing a 'nutrition transition', a shift to a more Western diet - a diet high in fat, calories, salt, refined sugar, processed food and prepared meals; a diet low in carbohydrates, and fresh produce (Sonnino, 2016). The over-consumption of this diet is implicated in widespread malnourishment and concomitant health consequences: high rates of obesity, and non-

[9] For the South African context: The Competition Act: Completion of the Grocery Retail Market Inquiry, Government Gazette No. 42869 (28 November 2019), Economic Development Department No. 1553. (Available for free at www.gpwonline.co.za)

communicable diseases (NCD) such as diabetes and cardiovascular diseases (Clapp & Scrinis, 2017; Igumbor et al., 2012; Sonnino, 2016).

The confluent effects of global processes of consolidation and the expanded power of Big Food interests have driven the nutrition transition (Clapp & Scrinis, 2017; Herman et al., 2018). "Powerful corporate players actively shape the availability, affordability, and acceptability of foods" (Greenberg, 2017, p. 2).

This accords with Wegerif (2014) and Fonte and Cucco (2017) in their conclusion that the current MFC is unsustainable. Dissatisfied with the status quo, there are increasing numbers of consumers organising for sustainable food production and supply. The last years of last century saw the development of alternative organised schemes of food provisioning (Abrahams, 2006; Pascucci et al., 2016). These initiatives become part of wider agrifood geographies.

2.4 Alternative food geography

2.4.1 Alternative food geography

Wiskerke (2009) suggests two different food geographies as approaches to ensure the "agri-food system can become healthier and more sustainable in social, economic and ecological terms" (p. 374). The 'hypermodern food geography' is the outworking of a conventional 'agri-industrial paradigm', which assumes the inevitability of agrifood processes becoming more industrialised and globalised. Whether propelled by motivations of profit or to improve sustainability of the overall system, policies, and planning lean into these very processes, with a reliance on technological responses to address problems and develop solutions. This includes strategies to produce healthier food, whether by farming or processing.

The 'alternative food geography' is steeped in an 'integrated and territorial agrifood paradigm', approaching food system production, processing, distribution, and consumption as regionally determined, and therefore requiring regional strategies that are unique (Wiskerke, 2009, p. 374). This paradigm assumes localised differences in culture, terrain, institutional governance and assistance, policy frameworks, and agrifood methods, processes, and networks. This geography is developed on principles of creating more sustainable food systems, and proponents of this geography advocate for promoting diets that are higher in fresh produce, lower in the processed foods attendant with the hypermodern food geography (Wiskerke, 2009). Strategies are tailored to the region's unique needs, consisting of dimensions working in an integrated way with each other to create an alternative food geography. Wiskerke (2009) lists these dimensions as regulated public food procurement, policies promoting urban food strategies, and alternative food networks. Bauler (2011) speaks of necessary interactions between practices at a micro-, meso-, and macro-levels.

Wiskerke concedes that most often, components of both paradigms are at work overlapping and creating a 'hybrid food geography' (Wiskerke, 2009). For this review, the focus will be upon the development and descriptions of one dimension of an alternative food geography: alternative food networks.

2.4.2 Alternative food networks

Production processes and the organisation of supply chains have become the focus of innovation for creating more sustainable agrifood networks (Brunori et al., 2012; Hankins & Grasseni, 2014), positioned as alternatives to 'conventional food networks' (Abrahams, 2006; Kirwan, 2004).[10] These alternative networks are largely understood as a response to concerns about the dominant industrialised food system (Feagan & Henderson, 2009; Zoll et al., 2018), with intentions either to 'exit' the system or to 'voice' opposition to the system (Bauler et al., 2011, p. 38).[11]

For those AFNs that are 'exiting', their intentions are to offer relationally-embedded supply chains and schemes that are 'other than' the MFC—in alignment with Brueggemann's encouragement to 'depart' systems that are inherently defunct (Brueggemann, 2010). Those 'voicing' opposition are in deliberate resistance to the MFC, ultimately seeking to reform the system through re-aligning values and structures. Using different conceptual terms, Allen et

[10] Conventional food networks are defined by Abrahams (2006) as "the food supply system that is linked to large-scale, productivist agriculture and supermarket retail, and the highly industrialised supply chain associated with industrialised, large-scale production and consumption" (p. 6).
[11] Bauler (2011) uses Hirschman's (1970) useful concepts of 'exit' and 'voice', as postural responses to the conventional food system (p. 76).

al. (2003) ask about AFNs: "Are they significantly *oppositional* or primarily *alternative"* (p. 61)? [Authors' emphases] As a generalisation, AFNs in Europe are motivated more by 'exiting', and those in North America by 'voicing' (Abrahams, 2006; Bauler et al., 2011).

It's important to note that the discussion in this section is Euro- and Americo-centric because much of the research has responded to those contexts. Later in this chapter, AFNs in the global South will be discussed separately, their motivations and manifestations as distinct from AFNs of the north.

These alternative food production and distribution networks have various forms, categorised under the umbrella term Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) (Renting et al., 2003; Sarmiento, 2017) - although some other broad labels used are alternative food chain (AFC) (Aubry & Kebir, 2013; Migliore et al., 2013), or alternative agrifood networks (AAN) (Bauler et al., 2011).

When the networks emphasize local transactions (Bauler et al., 2011), terms such as local food systems (LSF) (Feagan, 2007; Papaoikonomou & Ginieis, 2017) or localised agrifood systems (Renting et al., 2012) are employed.

Other names for these networks focus on the interrelations between the actors involved at all parts of the supply chain, from producer to consumer (Renting et al., 2003): short food supply chains (SFSC) (Demartini et al., 2017) and short supply food chains (SSFC) (Aubry & Kebir, 2013). Instead of relying on the terms 'new' or 'alternative' to describe hard delineations between AFNs and the MFC, informed by Ilbery and Maye (2005a), Kizos and Vakoufaris (2011) propose the use of SFCS as a "more analytic and clear way to describe AFNs" (p. 221), cutting through what are in fact often fuzzy dividing lines between the two system descriptors. AFN is commonly used as an umbrella term for all these labels (Renting et al., 2003; Sage, 2014); and for this thesis, the term AFN will represent and encompass all the terms given above.

Most AFNs are formed around moving "local, organic, environmentally sustainable and ethically sourced food" (Abrahams, 2006, p. 6) from producers to consumers in the most direct manner possible within the context. But to describe AFNs is not a precise activity (Kizos & Vakoufaris, 2011). Forssell and Lankoski (2014) list various definitions of AFNs according to different academics, each highlighting important aspects. Perhaps Renting et al. (2003) gave the most helpful distilled description:

> [AFN] on the one hand 'short-circuit' the long, anonymous supply chains characteristics of the industrial mode of food production. On the other hand, producer–consumer relations are 'shortened' and redefined by giving clear signals on the provenance and quality attributes of food and by constructing transparent chains in which products reach the consumer with a significant degree of value-laden information. Lastly, [AFN] are an important carrier for the 'shortening' of relations between food production and locality, potentially enhancing a re-embedding of farming towards more environmentally sustainable modes of production. (p. 398)

Because there are conceptual differences in the various forms of AFNs, a careful approach to discuss them is needed (Feagan, 2007). However, there are core commonalities helpful for discussing the breadth and scope of AFNs. After looking closely at the various forms of AFNs, Forssell and Lankoski (2014) found that all AFNs share common characteristics regarding the food that is being produced and supplied, the production processes, the organisation of the networks, and the people who participate in the networks (p. 66).

AFNs can manifest as farmers' markets (Fendrychová & Jehlička, 2018), farm shops (Bos & Owen, 2016), Fair Trade initiatives (Renard, 2003), the Slow Food Movement (Guthman, 2003; Miele & Murdoch, 2002), and selective patronage campaigns (Hinrichs & Allen, 2008), among other forms. Generally, producers initiated these schemes in attempts to access consumer markets with their goods in more favourable terms (Renting et al., 2012), often focused on developing localised rural economies (Little et al., 2010).

AFN participants consider themselves to be 'conscious consumers' (Zoll et al., 2018), 'ethical consumers' (Soper, 2007) or 'critical consumers' (Schifani & Migliore, 2011), seeking to better understand their food choices and trying to change their behaviour as consumers. Zoll et al. (2018), when studying motivations for participating in AFNs in Germany, found that AFN consumer participation stemmed from three broad positionings: being self-oriented, community-oriented, or socio-political.

2.4.2.1 <u>Emergence of food community networks</u>

In the last twenty years new kinds of AFNs have arisen in which the framing of producer-consumer engagement goes "beyond food provisioning itself" (Renting et al., 2012, p. 290). These consumers organise themselves to have more control over the production and supply of their food, forging new paths of collaboration with the producers of their food in ways that the burdens and benefits of food supply are shared (Renting et al., 2012). Rather than being understood in loose terms of being 'alternative' to the MFC, almost a default label, the terms on which these networks engage with the market are transformative (Bos & Owen, 2016).

These networks are discussed as distinct from other AFNs. When producers and consumers of AFNs organise in collaborative, reciprocal structures of food supply in which they both share costs and benefits, the term Food Community Network (FCN) applies (Migliore et al., 2013)—or other labels, such as Responsible Consumption Communities (RCC) (Papaoikonomou & Ginieis, 2017), or Civic Food Network (CFN) (Bos & Owen, 2016; Renting et al., 2012).

Migliore and colleagues (2013) describe the nature of FCNs as being socially-embedded. When commercial transactions between producers and consumers are embedded within direct interactions, space is facilitated for reciprocity and trust to grow between them (Migliore et al., 2013; Sage, 2003).

Another aspect of FCNs as distinct from AFNs is that they usually started from within an urban setting, as opposed to the rural starting point of AFNs (Renting et al., 2012). This is important for urban consumers, who usually live far from the production of the food they eat.

The FCN describes a variety of forms, from community-based urban gardening collectives, local food distribution initiatives, to purchase groups buying organic and local food (Bos & Owen, 2016; Renting et al., 2012).

FCNs are represented by diverse forms, but have common objectives, such as:

> Promoting agro-ecological production methods… favouring local and seasonal foods, thereby avoiding unnecessary 'food miles' and excessive energy consumption; offering fair remuneration to producers and other persons involved in different stages of the food system; and providing access to quality food for all income levels. (Renting et al., 2012, p. 298)

2.4.2.2 Solidarity purchase groups as food community networks

In the 1990s a new kind of FCN emerged in Italy, called a solidarity purchase group (SPG)[12]—in Italian, they are *Gruppi di acquisto solidale (GAS)* (Forno et al., 2015). These collectives source food and other items "directly from producers on the basis of ethical and environmental criteria and considerations of solidarity" (Fonte, 2013, p. 230).

SPGs structure themselves individually, with high participation of members (Forno et al., 2015; Grasseni, 2014; Migliore et al., 2014). Ideally, members of each group have responsibility to interact directly with one producer supplying—although Brunori et al. (2012) and Schifani et al. (2011) observed that in the SPGs they studied there were varying levels of participation and sharing of responsibilities. SPGs meet regularly to distribute food, discuss producers and products, hash out group 'business', and debate collaborations with other groups in their local networks (Grasseni, 2013; Hankins & Grasseni, 2014). Their emphasis is buying products that are organic and Fair Trade, and produced by small, local, farms (Hankins & Grasseni, 2014; Migliore et al., 2012).

A distinct feature of SPGs is their overt motivations for their collective purchasing:

> … to raise consciousness about food consumption, to establish trust relationships between consumers and producers (especially local ones), to foster short food chains through the solidarity between consumers and small producers… to guarantee fair prices, both for consumers and producers. (Corsi & Novelli, 2016, p. 3).

Whether collectives form as 'purchase groups' seeking their own economic advantage of buying better food for better prices, or their beginnings are rooted in response to the problems of the MFC, they're defined as an SPG only when their activities become motivated by additional intentions of 'solidarity' by "putting people and the environment before profit" (Grasseni, 2013, p. 14; Schifani & Migliore, 2011). SPGs undoubtedly hope to benefit from good prices, but it is not the only or primary motivation (Corsi A & Novelli S, 2016; Grasseni, 2014; Schifani & Migliore, 2011). In this way, participants understand themselves to be

[12] SPGs are active in all regions of Italy. They've developed outside of Italy, with an increase in Europe [e.g., Associations for the Maintenance of Peasant Agriculture (AMAP) in France, and Responsible Consumption Cooperatives (RCC) in Spain], North America, and Japan (Schermer, 2015).

conscious consumers, committed to becoming more informed and making value-laden, reflexive purchase choices.

SPGs have now become widespread nationally, and have formed and expanded outside of Italy, with an increase of SPGs in Europe,[13] North America, and Japan this century (Schermer, 2015). As SPGs multiplied in Italy, groups organised themselves into localised networks. Migliore et al. (2013) detail three progressive stages of SPG development within relational networks (pp. 553–554):

- The 'constitutive phase' is when members identify goods they want to purchase together, deciding which producers they wish to supply them, dividing tasks and responsibilities, and developing relationships with these suppliers. This phase is one in which trust builds between members themselves, and between the SPG and suppliers.
- In the 'intermediate growth' phase of development, SPGs expand and broaden their provisioning actions. They also support the formation of new SPGs, by giving advice and sharing knowledge. The network itself begins, albeit without clear planning or agendas, to interact with other "actors in the local area with a view to sharing, principles, ideals, and objectives" (Migliore et al., 2013, p. 553).
- In the last stage, the 'mature phase', SPG concretise their presence and influence within the wider system and structures of the food system. This phase is marked by development and initiatives to build an alternative socially-embedded economy.

As SPGs formalise networks locally, regionally, and nationally, they can work directly with producers to leverage food supply opportunities based in reciprocity (Migliore et al., 2013). Networks can map their food terrain and then work in close trust with producers in new and better ways (Grasseni, 2013).

[13] E.g., Associations for the Maintenance of Peasant Agriculture (AMAP) in France, and Responsible Consumption Cooperatives (RCC) in Spain.

Through these organised collaborations between producers and consumers, they aim to construct a more sustainable economy (Fonte, 2013), or what some call a ‘solidarity economy’ built on transactions embedded in ‘relations of regard’[14] between producers and consumers, which are relationships based in reciprocity and trust (Demartini et al., 2017; Grasseni, 2014).

SPGs are most effective when they are responsive and practically adapted to their local contexts (Grasseni, 2013). Grasseni (2013) writes about Italy’s *GAS* as a social phenomenon, the success of solidarity-driven purchase groups in their “local rooting”, because “weaving new circuits of value is a highly situated practice” involving knowledge of the territory and of its local economic actors (p. 106).

While it’s been important to point out an emergent distinction between AFNs and FCNs in the past few years, the literature doesn’t always agree upon the exact details of the distinctions. Sometimes there’s overlap, and sometimes the edges of their meaning are murky, used interchangeably, or are undefined, depending on who’s writing. To mitigate confusion when framing the literature, it will be most helpful to use the term AFN to refer to both AFNs and FCNs for the rest of this thesis—unless specifically discussing FCNs as distinct from AFNs.

2.4.3 Key dynamic constructs of AFNs

Sage employs the term ‘good food’ to communicate positive characteristics of food products, as well as to include the “set of actors broadly sharing a common set of values around food” (2003, p. 47). In effect, AFN consumers are turning to “values-based” purchasing in their pursuit of good food. In the sections below, some concepts of these values are explored and critiqued (Little et al., 2010, p. 1800).

2.4.3.1 Reclaiming quality

At their foundations, AFNs are an attempt to reconnect farming with food consumption (Kirwan, 2004; Winter, 2003b). As each value link of the supply-chain has become more industrialised and commodified—whether planning, production, storage, transporting, processing, packaging, distributing, decanting and repackaging, or retailing—in the process

[14]Sage (2003) writes about ‘relations of regard’ based on the work of Offer (1997) and Lee (2000), describing personal relationships of reciprocal respect between producers and consumers. Hughes (2006) and Demartini (2017) also discuss ‘relations of regard’.

the food and the raw materials for food have often lost much of their basic ‘food-ness’. It’s also argued that food has lost its cultural rooting in this shift (Wiskerke, 2009). Food quality is compromised: standardised (Morris & Buller, 2003), homogenous (Martinez et al., 2010), lacking freshness, more processed (Blay-Palmer et al., 2016), anonymous (Giampietri et al., 2018; Wiskerke, 2009), and has higher potential for health hazards (DuPuis & Goodman, 2005; Murdoch et al., 2000).

Since the 1990s, consumers have undergone “an evolution of taste” (De Fazio, 2016, p. 462), driving them to seek food that is healthier, natural, and of high-quality, that has also been produced with adherence to ethical standards (Winter, 2003b). This has been called a ‘turn to quality’ (Murdoch et al., 2000; Winter, 2003b), and it is argued that it’s the defining trait of AFNs (Winter, 2003a). The value being placed on the quality of food itself, this quality turn is often conceptually linked to notions of embeddedness and local food (Goodman, 2003; Murdoch et al., 2000).

A key feature of this quality turn is that it is driven by consumers moving toward food that they can feel better about eating—“foods that are not only good to eat, but good to think.” (Lockie & Halpin, 2005, p. 284) As part of AFNs, consumers “start revaluing the (social, cultural, environmental) meanings of food beyond mere commodity and economic transition” (Renting et al., 2012, p. 290).

But how is quality defined, and who defines it (DuPuis & Goodman, 2005; Ilbery & Kneafsey, 2000)? Quality is a social construction without clear parameters, that is fluid and contextually adaptable (Barbera & Dagnes, 2016; Ilbery & Kneafsey, 2000; Winter, 2003a). The concept of quality food, with belief in its superior attributes, has become juxtaposed to fast food, with assigned negative perceptions. Quality is equated with slow, conscious and healthy food consumption, pitched as the polar opposite of convenience, unhealthy and fast foods (Guthman, 2003).

AFNs claim to make quality food accessible to people of any income level (Renting et al., 2012). However, there is criticism about the elitism of the quality turn (D. Goodman, 2009). The food itself is often exclusive, putting barriers in place for many people to buy it (D. Goodman, 2009). The notion of quality implies people who settle for food that isn’t quality have “common tastes” (Guthman, 2003, p. 46). It raises class issues, in that it “suggests that ‘good’ food is out of the economic and cultural reach of non-elites” (Guthman, 2003, pp. 46). And it is a gendered conversation, because it’s the increasing numbers of working women who are often most helped by foods that offer more convenience (Guthman, 2003).

There are cautions against the assumption that the ‘quality’ food supply-chain beneficially impacts the food system it's part of. According to Guthman (2003), the pursuit of quality caused ‘organic’ production in California to become a high-intensity operation, such that the idyllic growing conditions consumers pictured for their organic greens instead were contributing to negative environmental and economic impacts. Watts et al (2005) argue that this commercial focus on quality food in itself and not the whole supply network, makes the food vulnerable to absorption into the MFC. As with any AFN conception, assumptions about the notion of quality as ethically better are problematic if not consciously interrogated and understood within the whole system and supply chain.

2.4.3.2 Re-localising food

The premise of AFN literature is that throughout much of history, food has providence and place, eaten within geography, heritage, and culture (Feagan, 2007; Kloppenburg et al., 1996). It’s argued that “global industrial agriculture has succeeded through the creation of a systemic ‘placelessness’”, the long supply chains disconnecting consumers from food production and ‘place’, and knowledge not traveling with the links to consumers (DuPuis & Goodman, 2005, p. 360).

When multiple links in food supply-chains are removed, transactions between producer and consumer become localised, creating localised food systems (Bos & Owen, 2016; Hinrichs, 2000). By shortening supply chains, AFNs are ostensibly reclaiming ‘place-based’ food (Grasseni, 2013; Papaoikonomou & Ginieis, 2017) through relocalised food networks (Feagan, 2007; Schermer, 2015). With this ‘turn to localism’, AFNs are assumed to be re-embedding food within place, and fostering connections that generate relational trust for consumers (Bos & Owen, 2016; Giampietri et al., 2018), and enabling a return to quality food. (Re)localised food networks thus become positioned as opposing food that is ‘placeless’ and ‘faceless’ (Goodman, 2009; Papaoikonomou & Ginieis, 2017) and globalised (Feagan, 2007; Morris & Buller, 2003).

AFN motivations for supporting local specifically state the desire for more sustainable and responsible consumption by using less fossil fuels to move food in SFSC (Fendrychová & Jehlička, 2018; Seyfang, 2006). An additional motivation is to support their local economy (Granvik et al., 2017).

Within this framework, ‘local’ is described as eating food from as close as possible to where it is produced, paving the way for reconnection between producer, consumer, and knowledge of the agrifood landscape (Papaoikonomou & Ginieis, 2017). ‘Local’, then, becomes the assumed logic and setting for AFN activity to be effective:

> The local tends to be framed as the space or context where ethical norms and values can flourish, and so localism becomes inextricably part of the explanation for the rise of alternative, and more sustainable, food networks. *(DuPuis & Goodman, 2005, p. 359)*

There is criticism of this logic. Who defines local (DuPuis & Goodman, 2005)? How is it defined (Morris & Buller, 2003)? With respect to production, raw materials, processing, and consumption, which part must be local (Granvik et al., 2017)? There isn’t an accepted standard definition, and therefore, there are different measures dependent on their contexts, and upon who is setting the parameters (Martinez et al., 2010; Papaoikonomou & Ginieis, 2017). Granvik et al. (2017) found that local is defined differently “by relative position of the actor in the supply chain, and their role in the food production process” (p. 8). Consumers themselves buy food based on their own personal understandings of local food, applying a ‘flexible localism’, fluidly defined as a tiny localised area, or by a national boundary, depending on relative determinants and needs (Granvik et al., 2017, p. 8; Morris & Buller, 2003, p. 565). Morris and Buller (2003), who introduced the phrase, describe ‘flexible localism’ as “a means to an end, rather than an end it itself” (p. 565).

Local isn’t always discussed in terms of geographical proximity, but also by “relational perspectives of place” (Goodman et al., 2009, p. 9).There are situations where local could involve greater distances but be defined local by the relationship and trust in the transactions (Papaoikonomou & Ginieis, 2017; Renting et al., 2003).

Food activists tend to equate the MFC with ‘global’ and AFNs with ‘local’ (Le Velly & Dufeu, 2016; Sonnino & Marsden, 2006). Within this binary, a ‘global’ food system is assumed to be industrial, corporate and capitalist, and so is assumed to be negatively characterised by environmental, social, and economic depletions; and the alternatives offered by the direct and short supply-chains of ‘local’ systems are assumed to be value-positive in their polar opposition to the global (Hinrichs, 2003; Ilbery & Maye, 2005b). This binary makes “‘local’ a proxy for the ‘good’, and ‘global’ a proxy for the ‘bad’” (Hinrichs, 2003, p. 35).

“Local food is conflated with just, organic, sustainable, secure, fresh or healthy food” (Purcell, 2006, p. 1924). This ‘romantic commodification’ of local (Papaoikonomou & Ginieis, 2017, p. 54) is what Born and Purcell (2006) call the ‘local trap’, a problematic assumption that local scale is inherently ‘good’ with good desired outcomes, and is even deemed superior to other scales. Local becomes an “end in itself” (Born & Purcell, 2006, p. 196). Born and Purcell (2006) question the assumption that socially-embedded local transactions ensure suppliers produce more sustainably than suppliers further away. Others join in their criticism that supporting local shouldn’t be assumed to be better for a local economy than supporting non-local (Demartini et al., 2017; Watts et al., 2005). They reason that local systems aren’t inherently more sustainable, or better at informing consumers than the MFC. When applied uncritically, a strategy for local can detract from pursuing other means that would have more sustainable outcomes.

Systems moving food to our mouths most places across our world are a complex mix of global and local systems interacting and intertwined (Hinrichs, 2003; Le Velly & Dufeu, 2016). It’s unhelpful to view these systems as completely separate from the other, let alone to assign oversimplified moral judgments, positive or negative, to either (Brunori et al., 2016; Hinrichs, 2003). Ilbery and Maye (2005a) and Le Velly and Dufeu (2016) speak of ‘hybrid spaces’ as a more helpful conceptual framework.

2.4.3.3 Redefining roles

Rejecting the reductive consumer-producer delineations for food provisioning, more consumers have discovered their agency to access food produced in more equitable and sustainable ways, organising food distribution channels that address these concerns (Brunori et al., 2012; Hankins & Grasseni, 2014). It's even posited that decisions to purchase (or not) could be votes for businesses, thereby equivalent to political activities (Schifani & Migliore, 2011).

Fioramonti asks: "Remember: we are consumers every single day. How often are we citizens?" (Fioramonti, 2017, p. 104) Convention assigns 'citizenship' and 'consumption' opposing values (Brunori et al., 2012; Grasseni, 2013), but newer types of AFNs are discovering the 'republican' facets of their consumerism (Soper, 2007). A shift from rigidly demarcated roles as 'consumer' to a much wider paradigm of what can be called 'food citizen' (Lyson, 2005; Renting et al., 2012), citizen-consumer (Bos & Owen, 2016; Demartini et al., 2017), or even political consumer (Hankins & Grasseni, 2014; Migliore et al., 2012), is the mark of FCNs (Renting et al., 2012).

However, with all the limitations of the term 'consumer' (Renting et al., 2012), there isn't a term that adequately replaces it with the possibilities and qualities inherent in the term 'food citizen'. It is simplest to speak of consumers within FCNs as taking on the dimensions and heuristic understanding of themselves as 'food citizens'.

Whereas earlier networks were often initiated by producers, more recently they are "initiatives in which citizens play an active role in the initiation and operation of new forms of producer-consumer relations" (Renting et al., 2012, p. 290). Moving from accepting their roles as passive food consumers, people have used their food purchasing activities to act in addressing environmental and social concerns (Migliore et al., 2013). This signifies a shift from the rigidly defined role of consumer to a broader mandate of active citizenship, in which food provisioning is one part of a holistic understanding of citizenship (Bos & Owen, 2016).

There are examples of consumers further expanding their roles as food citizens to act as 'co-producers', whereby they collaborate to varying degrees with producers in order to determine production practices or standards (Brunori et al., 2012; Grasseni, 2014). There are also examples of consumers taking agency as food citizens to choose to purchase certain products based on production processes, in this way acting as 'co-sumers' (Renting et al., 2012).

Role definitions have not only changed for consumers in FCNs. Conventional delineations put consumers and producers on separate sides of a value chain (Schermer, 2015), but FCNs have also reframed the roles of producers, from the functional role of supplying food to the market, to acting as collaborators in repositioning "food provisioning in a wider social and political meaning" (Renting et al., 2012, p. 290). Fonte speaks almost of a new era, beyond society based on consumerism, what she calls the "age of 'prosumption' … where production and consumption are reciprocally constituted" (Fonte, 2013, p. 230).

DeLind (2011) cautions about individuals believing they can address the ills of the world simply by changing their behaviour as consumers. If individuals' acts of food consumerism are one dimensional, devoid of understanding themselves as more than consumers, in isolation from their communities, or not understood as positioned within a food system that is regenerative, involvement in an AFN can simply be a feel-good exercise for the individuals. A focus on self is nurtured rather than a deeper care for the common good (DeLind, 2011). DeLind (2011) advocates for more ongoing self-reflection, continually questioning selves for direction and realignment of values. We need to be continuously "asked to re-connect to context—to the soil, to work (and labor), to history, or to place" (DeLind, 2011, p. 279). Fonte (2013) echoes this call for "continuous reflection" on the part of GAS members (p. 238).

2.4.3.4 Reconvening trust

A consequence for consumers of longer and often global food chains has been the loss of transparency about food production and ethical standards (Papaoikonomou & Ginieis, 2017). Information is lost with each link that food moves from farm to table, such that people eating food distributed through the MFC have difficulty getting full information about the source and quality of food they are consuming (Kloppenburg et al., 1996). This inability to access full information about their food in supply-chains with multiple links is experienced by consumers as information asymmetry (Brunori et al., 2016; De Fazio, 2016; Demartini et al., 2017).

As trust has diminished in the industrialised agrifood system to promote and regulate supply of food that is nutritional and hygienic (Goodman, 2009; Murdoch & Miele, 2004), equitable and sustainably produced and distributed conscious consumers are seeking trust through the agency and social connections generated by their participation in AFNs (Sage, 2007).

Whatmore et al. (2003) describe ‘reconvening trust’ (p. 389) between food producers and consumers as one of the core values of AFNs. These networks seek to foster repeated and more-direct transactions between consumers and producers, thereby reconnecting food production and consumption—a subject much explored in literature (Bos & Owen, 2016; Cook, 2006). The SFSC-nature of AFNs creates interactive space for producers and consumers to share information and values (Giampietri et al., 2018), “encouraging greater ‘contact’ and ‘context’ within food transactions” (Little et al., 2010, p. 1797). These interactions enable relationships of regard to develop, relationships based on mutual trust and mutual benefit between consumers and producers (Demartini et al., 2017; Hughes, 2005; Sage, 2007).

It’s then reasoned that the SFSC consumer receives the food “embedded with information” about its source, production methods and the producers’ values (Sage, 2003, p. 49). It is supposed that this increased supply-chain transparency empowers consumers to form their own value-judgments about the producers and the products (Giampietri et al., 2018). Trust produced by AFN activities has stepped in where full knowledge is absent (Giampietri et al., 2018).

Different forms of AFNs facilitate varying dimensions of interactive space for food transactions to happen. Marsden et al. (2000) developed three broad categories, differentiated by the physical length of the supply chains, which have been further explored in the literature by Sage (2003) and Giampietri et al. (2018), among others. Renting et al. (2003) frame these categories by relational proximity as well as physical proximity:

1. In the ‘face-to-face’ SFSC, consumers buy food directly from the producers or processors of their food. In this case, the personal interactions provide the medium for reciprocal trust to develop between all actors involved in these direct transactions (Migliore et al., 2013).
2. With the ‘proximate’ SFSC, usually there are intermediaries involved in the transactions between the consumer and the origins of the food, but the network is designed to create space for “relations of proximity” (Renting et al., 2003, p. 400). The consumer doesn’t interact directly with the producer or processor, but there is relational proximity because

of the short supply-chain. The food often originates in local or regional proximity to the point of purchase, although not always. In these networks, consumers put their trust in the network intermediaries to vouch for the value-laden qualities of their food supply.

3. The third category is the ‘extended SFSC’, whereby the product moves further geographical distances to reach the consumer. The critical factor is that the product is “embedded with value-laden information when it reaches the consumer”, and not the global distance it has been transported (Renting et al., 2003, p. 400). In these networks, consumer trust is placed in the knowledge of the product’s reputation (for example, regional specialty products), or in information conveyed about the quality or production of the food according to institutionally determined standards and codes (for example, Fair Trade labels or organic certifications) (Hughes, 2005), effectively “institutionalising trust” (Grasseni, 2014, p. 182).

As consumer trust is increasingly placed in the actors in their food supply-chains (Lassoued & Hobbs, 2015), AFN consumers will sometimes prioritise relational trust above the institutionalised trust that comes with extended SFSCs (Papaoikonomou & Ginieis, 2017). In cases where goods are not locally available, the trust in a relationship between producer and consumer can replace ‘local’ (Papaoikonomou & Ginieis, 2017). Even when it comes to the desire to buy organically produced food, organic production practices are desired, but organic certification can be “replaced by personal trust relations” (Schermer, 2015, p. 128).

Within AFNs, this trust builds not only between consumers and producers, but also between people collaborating with each other to organise their food supply. When people don’t “gather in the public square, interact in a variety of social capacities” (Fioramonti, 2017, p. 169), there isn’t social space to build trust. In a sense, AFNs can become a ‘public square’ or a “common” for people to gather, giving them time and space to connect with each other over shared food provisioning activities and values, building trust in and with each other (Grasseni, 2013, p. 21; Papaoikonomou & Ginieis, 2017).

The underlying premise of AFNs providing better informational transparency is the idea that the more direct the interactions with food producers, the better the reliability of the information communicated to the consumer. Born & Purcell (2006) question this premise, saying that information given directly from a farmer to a consumer isn't necessarily more reliable than the information that is conveyed via supply from extended SFSC. They go so far as to propose that the farmer's desire to make the sale could motivate dishonesty in the interaction (Born & Purcell, 2006).

In theory, when removing multiple links that food travels, another effect is that transactions between producer and consumer become direct—'face-to-face' and socially embedded (Giampietri et al., 2018). The concept of social embeddedness has come to imply supply interactions that are laden with social connection and trust, creating "the friendly antithesis of the market" (Hinrichs, 2000, p. 296). According to Hinrichs (2000) this is another unhelpful binary in discussing the complex, interwoven supply-chains making up our food systems.

It can't be assumed that these direct supply interactions between producers and consumers automatically foster social trust, and that relationships of trust are absent from the business of more globalised long food supply-chains; the point is often made that all economic connections are socially embedded in some way, whether the distribution chains are globalised or localised (Fioramonti, 2017; Hinrichs, 2000; Ilbery & Maye, 2005b; Winter, 2003a). Activism to support AFNs can primarily stem from resistance against food system globalisation (McWilliams, 2009; Seyfang, 2006). According to Hinrichs, if these networks are going to be offered as "sound, transformative alternatives, sentimental assumptions about face-to-face ties must be tempered" (Hinrichs, 2000, p. 301).

2.4.4 Critiques of AFNs

It's again important to note here that the descriptions of AFN activity described above are from networks in the global North, predominantly Europe and North America. AFN participation is largely associated with privilege (Haysom, 2016) and high incomes (Sage, 2007). It has also been observed that AFN spaces are predominantly white (Cook et al., 2010). Abrahams (2006) gave a helpful cameo of the prototypical AFN participant:

> Were I to sketch the profile of the imaginary customer envisaged by a fictitious AFN 'practitioner'—as suggested by AFN literature based in the north—she may look something like this: White, upper-middle class, with a sophisticated sensibility, middle to late-middle age, professional, academic, with access to transport and credit. (p. 30)

Forno and colleagues describe Italian *GAS* members as to being of similar demographics (Forno et al., 2015, p. 11). Cook et al. (2016) agree with this description of privilege.

There is critique of the exclusivity of AFNs (Brehm & Eisenhauer, 2008; Kato & McKinney, 2015), even when intentions are explicit for giving access to more cash-poor people (Renting et al., 2012),. Haysom (2016) frames participation as middle-class idealism and motivated by "upper class angst" as the underlying motivations for AFNs of the North (p. 7, citing Goodman & Goodman 2007).

Slocum et al. (2016) point out that even the Italian SPG have "solidarity gaps" because their "networks build on privilege" (p. 27). Migliore et al. (2013), in fact, note that SPGs expand the fastest within "advanced economies" (p. 550).

Although there's good reason for cynicism and caution, there's literature to support that this isn't always the full story of what is happening and why it's happening. For example, it has been found that many members of Italy's *GAS* participate because they want their food spending to support farmers with good labour practice, and they are willing to pay higher prices to support such farms (Grasseni 2013). For SPGs studied in Bergamo, Italy, Grasseni (2014) found that this rates as the highest driving value. They speak in terms of a solidarity economy driving their food activism.

When it comes to strategies for just food distribution, however, the solutions don't often take into account the complex layers of the systems moving our food from farm to mouth (Hinrichs & Allen, 2008). Depending on the specific AFN, social justice efforts are focused on keeping economic activities within local communities or regions, on good conditions for farm and production workers, or on economic empowerment initiatives for workers, etc—all which can be worthwhile in themselves. But there doesn't seem to be focus on access for people who are too cash-poor to participate in AFNs (Kato & McKinney, 2015).

Cadieux and Slocum (2015) caution against the ideals of ‘food justice’ or ‘food sovereignty’ being conflated with alternative food systems.[15] Glennie and Alkon (2018) use Hislop’s (2014) definition: “the struggle against racism, exploitation, and oppression taking place within the food system that addresses inequality’s root causes both within and beyond the food chain”. According to Bradley and Galt (2014), the work of food justice is ensuring people “have access to sufficient, affordable, healthy, culturally appropriate food, and – very importantly – respect and self-determination in all phases of food production, exchange, and consumption” (p. 173). When access is denied, the consequent “hunger, malnutrition, and food insecurity” are injustices that need to be addressed (Barnhill & Doggett, 2018, p. 8). It’s possible for AFN to be strategies for bringing about food justice; but it cannot be assumed that alternative food practices are addressing food system inequalities (Slocum & Cadieux, 2015). Diverse and low-income people are often prevented from accessing nutritious food through AFNs because of their unaffordability.

2.5 South African food system overview

2.5.1 Corporate agrifood system

Under South Africa’s Apartheid regime, the country’s agrifood system was regulated by a government in economic and political isolation. There is ample literature documenting the inequalities of land and farming policies along racial delineations in those years, the consequences of which impact the current realities of the country’s agrifood system (Ledger, 2016). However, the scope of this research project is focused on the post-Apartheid period.

In the years since the country’s shift to democracy in 1994, South Africa’s food system has been rapidly transforming (Battersby & Peyton, 2014). It displays the key characteristics of being well-entrenched within the corporate-led food regime: “increased trade liberalisation and access to foreign markets” (Kirsten et al., 2010, p. 7), deregulation, industrialised production, capitalisation and consolidation (Greenberg, 2015, 2017). Since 1994, the

[15] ‘Food sovereignty’ is the term used in the global South; ‘food justice’ is used elsewhere (Cadieux & Slocum, 2015). There are distinctions in what these terms refer to, even the term ‘food justice’ as it is used in the USA and elsewhere (Glennie & Alkon, 2018; Herman et al., 2018).

government has not had a cohesive strategy for regulating the food retail sector in a systemic way (Ledger, 2016). Deregulation and trade liberalisation since the early 1900s opened the way for the rapid increase of supermarkets (Battersby et al., 2015, citing Reardon et al. 2007 & van der Heijden & Vink 2013). Whereas before 1994 food retailers were price takers, deregulation shifted power in the system such that corporate retailers had the power to dictate prices, and thus are now price setters (Greenberg, 2015)—"enjoy[ing] enormous bargaining power" (Global Agricultral Information Network (GAIN), 2012, p. 9). This led to rapid consolidation and concentration of power in that sector (Greenberg, 2015).

Currently, four supermarket corporations now control 97% of formal food retail sales (Battersby & Peyton, 2014; Dannenberg, 2013; Pereira, Cuneo, et al., 2014).[16] This is estimated to be more than 60% of the country's food retail value (Ramabulana, 2011). Such is their market power—their "ability to extract value from both suppliers and customers" (Ledger, 2016, p. 23)—that they control food prices from the country's farm-gates to the shop tills. The difference between the farm-gate and retail price of food has increased over the past two decades, absorbed as profit by the corporate processors and retailers (Ledger, 2016). Supermarket retailers, especially, now hold the systemic power of "asymmetrical price transmission", whereby increased costs are transmitted to the prices consumers pay, but any cost reductions aren't (Greenberg, 2015, p. 13).

Large-scale processors have also consolidated and gained power in the system, and therefore are able to exert price setting power over farmers, albeit to a lesser extent than the corporate retailers (Greenberg, 2017).

The agriculture sector has adjusted to these local (and global) power shifts by industrialising and consolidating (Battersby et al., 2015). Farms have become price takers (Battersby et al., 2015), therefore it's primarily the farms that can leverage economies of scale that can stay in business, driving them to become larger (Battersby et al., 2015; Greenberg, 2017). Over the past twenty-five years, agricultural productivity in the country has remained stable, but the number of farms has dramatically decreased (Battersby et al., 2015; Greenberg, 2017).[17] The economies of scale driving the supply-chain raise the barriers to entry for small producers.

[16] This figure is drawn from the USDA GAIN (Global Agricultural Information Network) Report (2012).
[17] The number of farms in the country decreased by 76% between 1990 and 2008 (Battersby et al., 2015).

Small producers are marginalised, and there's a 'missing middle' of non-corporate farms (Greenberg, 2015, citing Aliber & Hall, 2010).

The corporate actors in the formal economy are increasingly dominant, and most people rely on them for some or all their food. However, the informal economy is estimated to comprise approximately 40% of food retail (Wegerif, 2020). This sector includes (with variations in the list and the terms) street hawkers and vendors, informal markets, spaza shops (informal shops), and shebeens (informal alcohol traders) (Crush & Frayne, 2011; Greenberg, 2017; Ramabulana, 2011; Strydom, 2015). Many people in the country buy their food from both the formal and the informal sectors (Battersby et al., 2015; Greenberg, 2015), especially lower-resourced households. There's often overlap between the two, in that the informal sector often sources items from formal wholesalers (Crush & Frayne, 2011).

A result of consolidation has been the loss of informational transparency, not only for consumers, but also for governance of the food system. Supermarkets don't share data about their business activities (Battersby et al., 2015). In fact, the food system has not been comprehensively mapped in a way that could inform regulatory measures (Greenberg, 2017).

2.5.2 Impacts

Corporate domination of the system has had wider negative impacts than reshaping the entire system as described above. In the short-term, supermarkets can offer consumers lower food prices. But the system itself has become rigged towards corporate interests, especially supermarket company interests. In the long-term their "unequal degrees of capital, power, voice and knowledge" gives them massive economic power over the flow of the system, and over the other actors in the system—including consumers (Battersby et al., 2015, p. 11).

Ultimately, with the financialisation of the food system, it is shareholder profit that fuels the further consolidation of corporate retailers. "Shareholders exert pressure to reduce costs each and every year, and this flows through the supply chain" (Greenberg, 2017, p. 9). According to Greenberg (2017):

> Retailers are under pressure, especially from shareholders, to increase returns. Economies of scale are the order of the day for the mass market. The sector is very competitive, with ongoing product and process innovations, together with suppliers, in a

> continuous quest for efficiency and cost savings, and in-store design and formatting innovations being adopted to find a competitive advantage. (p. 18)

Corporations cannot be counted on to self-regulate in the interests of consumers, producers, or any other actors in the system—only their shareholders, or the shareholders of other investors in their businesses.

Ultimately, it would be hoped that the food system would serve the nutritional needs of every person in a country. South Africa is considered food secure at a national level, but at a household scale there are high levels of hunger (Altman et al., 2009; Battersby et al., 2015; Pereira, Cuneo, et al., 2014). In 2013, 54.3% of South Africans were at risk of or experienced hunger (Shisana et al., 2013).[18] Food is available, but it isn't accessible enough to households (Frayne et al., 2014).

It has been debated whether supermarketisation has made food more or less accessible to South Africans, with arguments to support both sides (Battersby & Peyton, 2014). With high levels of hunger in the country, the MFC isn't making nutritious food sufficiently accessible to consumers. Supermarkets aren't physically accessible enough, because their locations aren't easily accessible to many lower-income consumers (Battersby & Peyton, 2014). It is also argued that food isn't economically accessible enough. South African consumers primarily access food by purchasing it (Pereira, Cuneo, et al., 2014). Economic access is determined by consumers having adequate income to pay for the food, and by food prices that are affordable (Battersby et al., 2015).

South Africa has one of the highest rates of wealth inequality in the world. According to the World Bank, in 2015 the richest 10% had 71% of net wealth, while the poorest 60% had 7% of net wealth (*South Africa Overview*, 2019). Given the country's Apartheid history, it's impossible not to note here that the wealth still largely sits with the white population, and the poorest 60% are largely people of colour. This inequality has implications for who does and doesn't have access to food. The top 10% can purchase and enjoy the country's food abundance, while the bottom 60% are excluded because they are cash poor.

[18] South African National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (SANHANES -1), 2013.

The Bureau of Food and Agricultural Policy has calculated the cost of a ‘thrifty healthy food basket’ to feed a family of four (consisting of two adults and two children), to meet their basic nutritional needs for a month. In April 2019 (the year I conducted interviews for this research), the ‘thrifty healthy food basket’ was calculated at ZAR2,524. With the assumption that 35% of total expenditure is earmarked for food, a household would need an income of ZAR7,212 to be able to buy a monthly food basket. For the city of Cape Town, where this research is located, low household incomes and high food prices relative to income meant that 61.4% of Cape Town’s population can’t afford a sustained nutritional diet of the ‘thrifty healthy food basket’ (Battersby et al., 2015, p. 20). With South African food inflation rate among the highest in the world over in recent years, there is no reason to assume situation had improved by 2019 (*BFAP Baseline: Agricultural Outlook 2019-2028*, 2019).

The repercussive health effects of this widespread hunger and malnutrition are high levels of obesity and non-communicative diseases, such as hypertension and diabetes (Pereira, Bormann, et al., 2014). In South Africa, approximately one-third of all children are undernourished (Greenberg, 2015, p. 13), resulting in stunting and underweight (Altman et al., 2009); concurrently, 55% of adults are overweight or obese (Greenberg, 2015, p. 13).

South Africa is well into the globally observed nutrition transition: the move to a more westernised diet that’s higher in fat, sugar, and animal-related products (Battersby et al., 2015; Greenberg, 2015), and more highly processed, less healthy foods (Battersby et al., 2015). The MFC is contributing to South Africa’s nutrition transition. Trade liberalisation is accelerating the nutrition transition with the increased imports of processed foods (Igumbor et al., 2012). Foods that are packaged and processed are profitable for retailers, so they are promoted by Big Food with the full force of corporate-sized marketing budgets (Battersby et al., 2015; Greenberg, 2017). This has the long-term effect of influencing the consuming public’s desire for these nutritionally-poor products (Igumbor et al., 2012). Supermarkets have become an efficient channel for distributing these foods. Healthy foods that are available are more expensive, often even unaffordable for many (Battersby & Peyton, 2014; Igumbor et al., 2012).

The rapid expansion of supermarkets also threatens the existence of local businesses and traders (Battersby et al., 2015), because they give access to food at cheaper prices. These informal traders are a very important source of food for the poor, because they offer food on credit, they offer smaller pack-sizes, and they are often more physically accessible to people living in lower-income communities away from main public transport lines (Battersby, 2011b; Battersby & Peyton, 2014; Jackson, 2010; Wegerif, 2020).

Consolidation of the food system has not only adversely impacted the retail sector but also production. The increase in intensive agriculture has had a detrimental impact on the country's farmlands. Mega-farms' heavy reliance on mono-cropping have pushed the use of synthetic fertilizers, chemicals and irrigation (Greenberg, 2015 as citing Vink & Van Rooyen, 2009), increasing the use of GMO seed. This has contributed to loss of plant biodiversity (Battersby et al., 2015). Heavy tillage, limited crop rotation and over-grazing contribute to soil degradation and erosion (Greenberg, 2015, citing Vink & Van Rooyen, 2009). Extensive irrigation is over-using groundwater, and contributes to soil degradation (Greenberg, 2015). Government initiatives for land reform generally promote this dominant trend.

> Support to new farmers favours short-term financial viability rather than longer-term social, ecological and even economic sustainability, with unhealthy results for the agro-food system as a whole. (Greenberg, 2015, p. 17)

If the MFC is unsustainable for the country, are there alternatives systems to consider? AFNs in the South Africa context are discussed in the next section.

2.5.3 Alternative food networks in the South African context

As compared to the growing body of literature coming from the global North, there's relatively little written about AFNs in the South.[19] [20] One exception that is covered quite extensively is the Fair Trade[21] movement, a particular type of extended SFSC. Fair Trade serves to bring

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[19] Fendrychová and Jehlička (2018) note that "existing concepts and discussions are mainly based on the research conducted in North America and Western Europe" (p. 3).

[20] There is literature covering the food sovereignty movements of the global South, e.g., Via Campesino, which are "rooted in the struggles of peasant farmers in the global south to resist the dominance of global agribusiness and maintain access to land and traditional farming practices" (Glennie & Alkon, 2018, p. 2). But as noted in Section 2.4.4, food sovereignty movements describe different social organization and activities than those of AFNs.

[21] "Following common convention in the literature, 'Fair Trade' refers to the movement as a whole, whilst 'Fairtrade' signifies the section certified by Fairtrade Labelling Organisations International (FLO)" (Herman, 2010, p. 2).

connection between the producers, consumers, markets and stakeholders involved in production (Herman, 2010) when geographical distances otherwise usually hinder connection.

> Fairtrade is a system of certification that aims to ensure a set of standards are met in the production and supply of a product or ingredient. For farmers and workers, Fairtrade means workers' rights, safer working conditions and fairer pay. For shoppers it means high quality, ethically produced products. (Fairtrade Foundation, 2021)

According to Doherty et al. (2015, p. 158), "Fair Trade emerged to commercialise Southern products in the Global North on terms overtly beneficial to Southern producers." More recently, these markets for these networks have grown within the global South itself (Doherty et al., 2015).

For the many other kinds of AFNs, the literature describes networks different from those of the North, both in motivations and manifestations. AFNs of the North are often studied as the "celebration of alternative consumption" (Abrahams, 2006, p. 8), their approach to the MFC to either 'exit' or 'voice' (Bauler et al., 2011). AFNs of this nature have a small, nascent presence in South Africa in the form of purchase groups and farmers markets serving particular groups of consumers (Battersby et al., 2015), but little has been written about them. This project situates itself within this gap. The predominant expression of AFNs in the global South reflects AFNs of a different nature (Abrahams, 2006; Haysom, 2016).

Haysom (2016) cautions against applying the supply-chain logic and assumptions of Northern AFNs to the context of the global South. He argues that the privileged and middle-class models and strategies of Northern AFNs aren't transferrable to the South, where the mix of increasing urbanisation, pervasive poverty, and growing food insecurity need different interventions.

If descriptors were assigned to AFNs of the South, they might be 'survival' and 'access'. In the context of urbanisation and supermarket consolidation, many poor people find themselves excluded from the conventional food systems (Haysom, 2016), or unable to access cultural food that is locally unavailable (Abrahams, 2006; Nyamnjoh, 2018). Therefore, the majority of AFNs are formed in urban areas as strategies of the poor for coping or surviving, or to access cultural food (e.g., halaal and traditional food) (Abrahams, 2006).

> They are reactionary to inadequate supermarket food provisioning, and the alternative food networks materialise as a result of the demand for cultural food that was previously home-grown or unavailable. (Abrahams, 2006, p. 24)

These networks usually develop for different reasons than AFNs of the global North. Motivations to organise for reasons of changing the system might be present, but they don't have primacy (Abrahams, 2006).

2.5.3.1 AFNs as a strategy for the poor

The MFC doesn't adequately serve the nutritional needs of the poor in the global South (Abrahams, 2006; Haysom, 2016). Those who are excluded have taken agency to access food for survival, with provisioning strategies based on social networks (Battersby, 2011a; Crush & Frayne, 2011), using social capital for sharing and borrowing (Battersby, 2011a, 2012), and exchanging (Haysom, 2016). However, these strategies are not considered resilient in the long-term, as households low in resources are increasingly burdened by food scarcity (Battersby, 2011a).

South Africa also has a long tradition of grocery collectives known locally as *stokvels*, in which members contribute regularly to a credit pool, with a rotating pay-out to purchase food (Lakhani, 2014; Misselhorn, 2009). *Stokvels* leverage social capital for members to help each other benefit from access to financial capital (Misselhorn, 2009) and purchasing power (Pereira, Cuneo, et al., 2014). There are many variations of stokvels, and they are one component of food access for many people in lower-income communities. However, if people aren't able contribute the fixed contribution, they are excluded from *stokvels*. Insufficient or irregular household income is a barrier against participating (Misselhorn, 2009).

It could be argued people participating in these networks are employing Brueggemann's practice of neighbourhood to meet food needs in ways that are absent from many AFNs of the Northern models (Brueggemann, 2010).

2.5.3.2 AFNs as strategies to access culturally-specific food

Abrahams (2006) names a second key motivation to organise alternative networks, and that is "culturally diverse communities" forming networks in order to access "culturally-specific food" (p. 7). With increasing migration and urbanisation, these networks are formed by people wishing to access foods grown rurally or in their home countries, or to access cultural foods (for example, *halaal* foods) (Nyamnjoh, 2018).

2.5.3.3 Conclusion

The AFN literature has a bias and a lens for AFNs of the North. The AFNs as described here have largely been uncategorised as AFNs, but it is contended that they should be considered AFNs (Abrahams, 2006; Haysom, 2016). Abrahams (2006) further argues that Southern AFNs have contributions to make to AFNs theory of the North, although this hasn't yet been recognised.

I return to the concept of an alternative food geography. Most Southern AFNs in their current manifestations are helping people survive and access cultural foods, but they aren't offering more socially, economically and environmentally sustainable options (Wiskerke, 2009). This research explores one AFN in Cape Town that aspires to support a more sustainable alternative to the MFC, by describing and analysing it in its location within the broader food geography.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Informed by global and local debates on the effectiveness of AFNs providing viable alternatives to the MFC, I began the research process to study the Good Food Club as a specific form of AFN in its local context of South Africa's agrifood system.

3.1 Research design

The aim of this research was to describe the formation and development of the GFC as a SPG, and to explore the values motivating participation. I drew this data primarily from members, suppliers, and the co-founder themselves. I focused on documenting the development of the original GFC which had loose, informal beginnings in 2007. As of January 2020, there are eleven GFCs operating in the greater Cape Town surroundings, but until a second GFC started in early 2016 only the original GFC existed. For the first ten years of GFCs in Cape Town, this group established a basic working model that ten new GFCs emulated.

As I will explain in Chapter 4, in October 2016 this original group divided to form two groups: GFC-X and GFC-Y.[22] The two co-founders, of which I am one, each took leadership of one of the newly divided groups. Because I wished to include this split as an integral part of the history of the GFC, I gathered data from members from both groups. Both GFCs still work very closely together; for example, sharing supplier data and administrative tools. Because of these shared origins and relatively recent split, when the GFC is referred to in this chapter without specific reference to either GFC-X or GFC-Y, it refers to suppliers and members from both groups.

3.1.1 Interviews

I set up interviews intending to gather information from GFC participants on both sides of the supply and demand relationship: it was important to hear from both those who supply goods to the GFC, and members who purchase from these suppliers.

To chronicle the history of the GFC, I chose as my primary method for data collection to interview GFC members and suppliers using an interview format with a consistent structure,

[22] The names of the identifying suburbs aren't used for reasons of protecting anonymity.

but also giving space to capture narratives that weren't structured. I wanted to capture participants' reflections about their own values and motivations for their GFC involvement. "Such studies typically involve systematic, iterative coding of verbal data, often supplemented by data in other modalities" (Blandford, 2013, p. 2).

Some of responses elicited were concrete (having to do with dates, finances, specific foods, etc.), and some were 'softer' (having to do with perceptions, values, etc.). There was information about GFC involvement that I wanted from each interviewee, but I also wanted to provoke conversational narrative that could go 'off-script'.

In consultation with my research supervisors, I decided that semi-structured interviews with members, suppliers, and key informants would be the best method to achieve the aims of this research. Semi-structured interviews are an appropriate tool for studying complex or "emotionally sensitive" issues, like people's opinions or personal perceptions (Kallio et al., 2016, p. 2959). This method is also suitable "when there were issues that participants were not used to talking about, such as values, intentions and ideals" (Kallio et al., 2016, p. 2959).

I developed separate interview guides for the two groupings of members and suppliers. I didn't create a third interview guide for the co-founder's interview because, although she's a convener, she functions as a member. Instead, I followed the interview guide for the members, with these differences: I didn't ask every question, but kept to the wider topics in the order on the guide; and I wished to make it as conversational as possible. The purpose for this was to elicit more of the history of GFC development—not only about developments, but *why* decisions were made.

Both sets of interview guides were formatted in two sections: The first section, asking questions about their historical and current involvement with the GFC, as a member or supplier; the second section, asking questions about values. I took the values highlighted directly from a list of GFC values that the two founders had compiled, as described in the next chapter.

3.1.2 Ethics approval

Because this research involved people, I applied to the Faculty of Science Research Ethics Committee to carry out this research as designed. The Committee's chief concern was around the potential conflict of interest that I highlighted regarding the fact that I am a customer of business owners (GFC suppliers) who I was interviewing. I addressed this concern within consent forms—separate forms for supplier and member interviewees. The consent forms were emailed to each interviewee prior to interviews, and then discussed and signed by the supplier prior to or immediately before starting interviews. In June 2019, the Faculty of Science Research Ethics Committee granted written approval [FSREC 63–2019] to conduct the interviews.

3.2 Data collection

The primary sources of evidence were interviews with suppliers, members, the co-founder and interview follow-up information as needed. Besides the interviews, I used evidence from primary sources. Specifically:

- Historical information and data from emails, meeting notes, and financial records/ ordering system records, but used anonymously to ensure confidentiality.
- Essays I wrote for a Leadership in Urban Transformation certificate course I completed through the University of Pretoria (completed in 2018).

3.2.1 Interviews

I interviewed seven members, seven suppliers, and one key informant, the co-founder. I held interviews where it was most convenient for the interviewees to talk privately. Ideally, I wished to hold supplier interviews at their places of business; but if the interviewees preferred another more private venue, I went with their wishes.

As the other GFC co-founder myself, I took an ethnographic posture throughout the interviews to add textured insight, notwithstanding the inherent assumptions I had to navigate.

To safeguard confidentiality, I assigned pseudonyms to each interviewee.

3.2.1.1 Member interviews

I chose members who had been economically active[23] in the GFC for at least seven years, since involvement over time would: 1) enable deeper reflections on GFC history and their activity as members, and 2) allow for looking back on potential shifts in their attitudes and values driving their GFC involvement, and what might have contributed to these shifts.

I chose five members who had increased the financial size of their orders from their first involvement until present; and chose two who met the 'long active' criterion, but their orders hadn't financially increased. This criterion was an interesting determinant to apply, because financial expenditure in the GFC could show levels of commitment to club values. This was something I wanted to explore in the interview setting.

I interviewed five members of GFC-X and two members of GFC-Y In addition, I interviewed the convener of GFC-Y as a key informant, the other co-founder.[24]

The interview guide started with a section focused on their GFC activity as members: asking questions about social connections and reasons for joining, what foods were they interested in, benefits and challenges for participation, and what they would like to change. I included questions about their monthly household food budget, and what their average GFC monthly spend is.

I then presented each GFC value listed on the *values matrix*, a working list of values that the co-founder and I had recorded that informed our purchase activities and our choice of suppliers. I asked them about opinions, perceptions, and observations. None of the members had previously seen this values matrix in a collated bullet form, although they would have probably read about them in emails from the conveners over the years.

I held the pilot for the member interviews in June 2019. I revised the interview guide and conducted the rest of the member interviews over the following months, until the last one on 25 September 2019. I held five interviews at interviewees' homes, one at my home, one

[23] *Economically active* as defined by participating in at least eight monthly GFC orders each year.
[24] I am the other co-founder, and am the convener of GFC-X.

at a café, and one in my car after an unsuccessful start in a noisy lunch café at the interviewee's place of employment.

As I interviewed members, the interview guide evolved a bit more. Specifically:

- In the second interview, I added specific questions about supporting 'small' and 'local' businesses as a value.
- I avoided using jargon, e.g., *pasture-fed* or *free-range.* People ascribe different meanings to these terms. However, by the third interview, I felt it would be helpful to ask interviewees for their own definitions of what the terms 'organic', 'small' [business] and 'local' [business] mean.
- The first three interviewees mentioned packaging of food as an environmental concern, so from the fourth interview I included questions about packaging.

3.2.1.2 Supplier interviews

The supplier list of the GFC comprises both producers and intermediaries. Because the GFC prioritises buying food directly from the business producing the food they are buying, I ensured that at least half of the interviewees were the producers of the food they supply to the GFC. Of the two delineations (producer and intermediary), the largest invoicing suppliers over the past two years were then prioritised for interviews. This was important because one of the GFC values aspired to is to be economically beneficial to their suppliers. Ultimately, the GFC relationship between suppliers and members is a business relationship. I decided to interview four producers who supply the GFC directly, and three intermediaries.

One supplier I requested to interview said her farm work kept her too busy. Another supplier said she would speak to her business-partner husband, but then never responded to my request beyond that. I read the lack of enthusiasm as reluctance, so didn't press any further for an interview.

I held the pilot for supplier interviews on 27 June 2019. In discussions with my supervisors, it was decided that this interview guide didn't need major revisions, so I used this interview in the supplier data set. The rest of the supplier interviews were conducted over the following months until the last one on 10 September 2019. I held three of these interviews at the interviewees' places of business, including a farm; I conducted a telephonic interview with a farmer based in a rural area a few hundred kilometres from Cape Town; and I held three interviews in cafes.

I arrived at one interview to find that the interviewee's spouse was also going to sit in on the interview to contribute. He isn't as involved in the GFC relationship as his spouse, the person who I had asked to interview, but he could give valuable contribution because of his responsibility with overseeing the accounting side of their business.

3.2.1.3 Co-founder interview

I decided to interview a key informant who was integral to the GFC formulation. I would have been remiss if I didn't include interview data from the co-founder, who currently leads the GFC-Y. Her interview would be critical for providing 'institutional memory'. I held this, the final interview, on 11 September 2019.

3.2.1.4 Interview follow-ups

I got some responses from interviewees post-interviews, whether necessitated by the evolution of the members' interview guide, or because of questions I missed.

In asking suppliers to give the breakdown of their business sales according to the categories of customers (e.g., GFC, small retailers, large retailers, etc.), in two interviews I was told I should follow up post interview for this information. I did this via email and via WhatsApp, receiving responses the same ways. One supplier never gave this information, even after multiple requests.

3.2.2 Historical information and data from GFC primary sources

To capture the key developments and milestones of the GFC's history, the interviews were the main source of evidence. However, memories can be inaccurate and vague. In fact, interviewees' memories were not reliable for historical GFC involvement. Most of the interviewees underestimated how long they had participated in the GFC. Therefore, I needed to find information from primary sources. Because of our slow and unplanned development, we didn't document our business and activities thoroughly in our early days. I struggled to find records from the first few years. These sources, such as they are, were used to add detail to the GFC history written in the next chapter.

3.2.2.1 Emails

GFC business has been organised primarily via email. I did topical searches of my email files to excavate the information that I needed.

3.2.2.2 Meeting notes

To write about the GFC being researched as an SPG within the network of eleven GFCs around greater Cape Town, it was necessary to extract notes from network meetings.

3.2.2.3 Financial records/ Ordering system records

GFC orders from the start until 2014 were recorded an increasingly unwieldy array of spreadsheets. From 2014, the GFC began using an ordering IT-platform on the foodclub.org website. This USA-based platform was free for any purchase group to use. We registered each of our members as users, and this platform became the place that holds data about individual and total group orders from the time of registration.

I was interested to compare members' invoices against the average amounts they said they were spending via the GFC. Similarly, I wanted to check invoice figures for the supplier businesses. I was also interested to extract information tracking the growth of monthly GFC order totals as they changed over the years.

3.2.3 Challenges in data collection

I encountered a few challenges conducting these interviews. Some of the recordings of interviews held in places that had various levels of background noise—cafes, work premises or even homes (barking dogs) —were compromised at times.

The telephonic interview as initially set-up proved troublesome to record, such that the first portion of the interview wasn't recorded. This portion primarily covered the farmer speaking about his farm, and his history with the farm. Post-interview, I got WhatsApp audio responses to the missing questions.

The suppliers are all busy people running businesses, so I struggled to get follow-up information from a few of them. I had to send reminder emails to get responses. I chose not to pursue answers from two suppliers, after repeated follow-up requests for responses without success, deciding the lack of response itself was worth noting as data.

3.3 Transcription

My cell phone was used to record each interview, and I transcribed every interview using the open source oTransribe software orthographically. When applying thematic analysis, Braun and Clarke recommend producing an 'orthographic' transcript, which is an exact representation of all verbal and nonverbal expression (2006).

3.4 Assumptions, limitations, and delimitations

As one of the two GFC founders, I was researching a subject for which I was and currently am a key stakeholder. This posed inherent challenges for three fundamental reasons:

1. For members, the GFC is an informal, but closed purchase group, and could have felt it threatened their membership if they gave responses that were critically negative. Members also might have felt socially awkward sharing negative opinions with someone they interact with regularly. I raised this issue before each interview, giving assurance that honest responses would be most helpful for this research.
2. Suppliers are running businesses for which the GFC is a customer, and the GFC convener has the power and influence to pull business away from suppliers. Would the suppliers feel secure sharing honest opinions or perceptions about the GFC to me, a convener, if the opinions and perceptions were negative? As noted in 'Ethics approval' above, a consent form drafted specifically for the supplier interviewees addressed this concern. I assured supplier interviewees that I would keep their responses as confidential as possible with the dissemination of the research findings. Complete confidentiality could not be guaranteed, simply because of the small number of GFC suppliers per type of product being supplied.

3. I found it difficult to ask questions of members and suppliers they might have perceived as critical. I know these people personally now.

Another limitation stemmed from the commercial nature of food supply. All the GFC suppliers are hands-on owners of small businesses in the busy food supply sector; some suppliers are also farmers who carry the heavy workload of managing farm concerns in addition to supply-side business concerns. One farmer with whom I requested an interview, declined saying he was too busy to give the time.

The scope of the dataset was *depth* rather than *width*. I interviewed fifteen people, which is not a large sample size when split between suppliers, members and the one co-founder. Within the dataset of supplier interviews, the suppliers represent producers and intermediaries, some operating as both producers and intermediaries. Three were rural farmers, two of which also act as intermediaries for surrounding farms; two run urban-based intermediary food wholesale and retail businesses; and two were urban-based producers. Because they reflect a diverse range of businesses, it could have been helpful to have a larger sample size of suppliers.

Some supplier interviewees deal directly with the GFC (i.e., the researcher) to supply monthly orders, but for others it is their employees who handle direct contact with the GFC. The suppliers with less direct regular contact with the GFC couldn’t always answer questions about the logistics of the supply interactions.

The interview guides included questions about members’ own values. Values as abstractions can vary with personal perceptions, and it is possible for interviewees to speak about the same named values, but with different understandings of their meaning. I avoided the use of jargon when speaking about the constructs. I set the interview guide to get members to speak about their own understanding of how these values would manifest in the food product, distribution, and purchase through the GFC.

Getting members to give accurate and honest feedback about their opinions and values had the following potential challenges:

1. People’s values regarding the food they buy are personal. Expressing opinions, especially when weighing one value over another, can be a place of vulnerability. The

interview guide gave multiple opportunities to draw responses about each different value, and the interview tone was kept conversational and non-judgmental.

2. GFC members have learned new information about the food system over the years of GFC activity, and they've shifted and/or deepened some of their values over time. Their memories about earlier motivations and values driving their food purchasing might not be reliable, especially if those have shifted. To counter this problem, I tried to ask about the same values in different ways at different times throughout each interview, looking for cross-confirmations or contradictions.

3.5 Methods of data analysis

The method I used for analysing GFC informant behaviours, relationships and perceptions was Thematic Analysis. With this method, I coded each transcript and then developed themes (Braun & Clarke, 2012). This enabled me to consider the themes expressed by both members and suppliers, juxtaposing places of similarities and differences, reflecting on implications for the food system, and solidarity purchase groups.

As part of the Thematic Analysis method, the interview data needed recursive sweeps through the transcripts. I did this first using paper and pencil, and then laptop, and then both. Specifically:

1. I read through paper copies of transcribed interviews, making notes.
2. I wrote summary pages for each set of questions, looking for natural groupings of information.
3. I then coded each interview on NVivo, according to topics and headings developed from the previous two stages.
4. I went back to paper, and using the NVivo coded data units, I represented the data in various drawings, and then ultimately mapped themes.

Chapter 4: The Good Food Club – A History

4.1 Introduction

The development of the GFC as an AFN in Cape Town, South Africa, has followed similar patterns to AFN developments elsewhere in the world. This chapter presents a history of its formation and development, pulling information and timelines from interviews with the GFC participants and suppliers. (See Figure 1 for a timeline of this history.) This history draws heavily upon the interview with the co-founder, Hannah, and my own ethnographic contributions. Historical record sources contributed additional detail to the account.

Its development is framed within the progressive development stages of solidarity purchase networks as set out by Migliore et al. (2013) described in Chapter 2. Its formation is recounted from its *ad hoc* beginnings as a purchase group; its gradual self-ideation as a SPG in effect, if not in exact form; the division and replication of this group; and finally, the GFC as part of a newly forming AFN.

4.2 Constitutive phase

In the GFC's 'constitutive phase' of development (Migliore et al., 2013), members build their purchase group as a functioning collective, by choosing suppliers and products, and dividing out the work needed to make the collective function efficiently. It is a time for establishing relationships between members themselves, and between the collective and suppliers; it is also a time for trust to grow within these relationships.

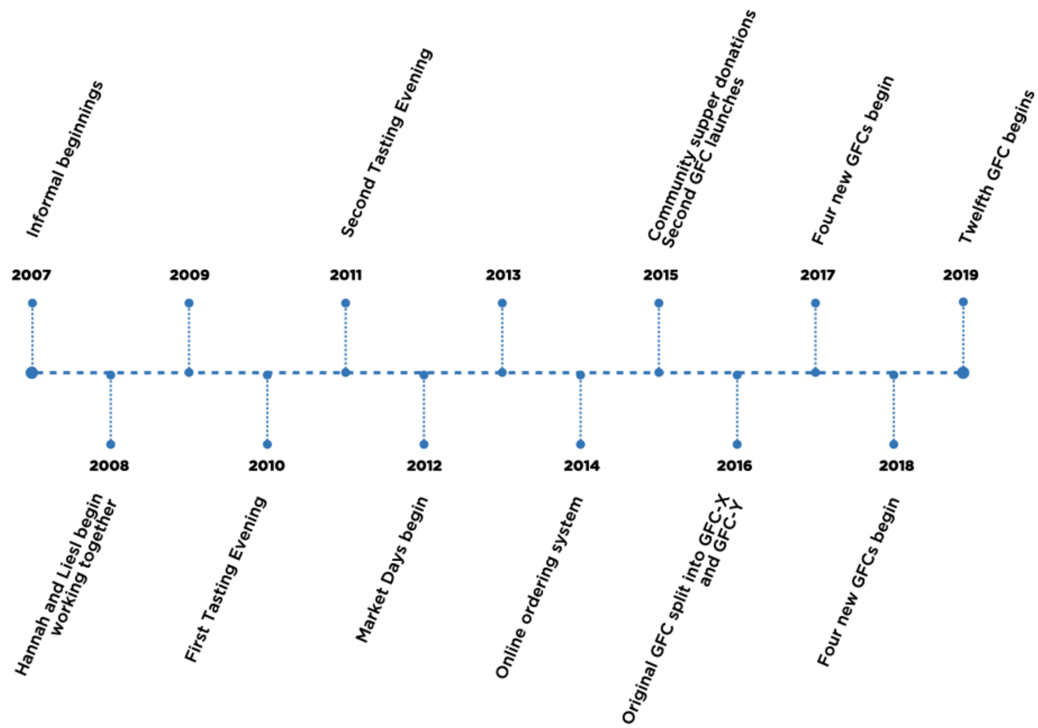

Figure 1: Timeline for development of original Good Food Club and the network

4.2.1 Beginning to buy food together

Sometime in the year 2007, I began to want something more from the food my family was buying. I wanted something loosely defined at that point, but knew it was related to the food's quality. I wanted food that was fresh, that wasn't intensively farmed; food that was less factory-produced and less-processed; food that I could know more about how it was made and travelled to me. I didn't think I would find it on supermarket shelves. This was an unconscious 'turn to quality' as discussed in the literature by academics such as Murdoch (2000) and Goodman (D. Goodman, 2003, 2009).

I began ordering food from an organisation called the Ethical Co-op,[25] collecting my orders at a café five kilometres from my home. I was grateful for access to food I hoped was

[25] "The Ethical Co-op is an online organic and biodynamic market offering an extensive range of affordable high quality organic local seasonal fruit and vegetables, dairy, baked goods, tea, coffee, body and household products.' (https://www.opengreenmap.org/greenmap/cape-town-green-map/ethical-co-op-3256)

qualitatively better than what I could buy in the supermarkets, but I did find the prices expensive for our household budget.

When collecting my orders, I started buying wedges of farm cheese cut directly from the 2.5kg heads. I asked the owner of the café if I could buy whole heads a time, but at a smaller price per kilogram. She kindly encouraged me to buy directly from her supplier, a cheese wholesaler–which I promptly did.

Then I wondered: why not buy directly from the producer to get a better price? I called the farm named on the cheese label and spoke to the cheese-maker himself. This man considered himself a cow farmer more than a cheese-maker. He liked making cheese, but that was secondary to farming; making cheese was born out of the necessity to use the milk his beloved cows produced. I asked him under what conditions would he be willing to sell directly to me, the consumer of his cheese, rather than to a company? He was willing to sell directly to me for an order worth a minimum of ZAR1,500.

I invited friends to join me in an order. Although I don't remember the details well, and I don't remember exactly who joined that first order, I didn't struggle to meet the minimum order. The farmer delivered heads of cheese to my home, and people came to collect their orders. After that first successful order, I organised subsequent orders. (See Photo 1 for a photo of a GFC cheese delivery.) When our orders increased within that first year, the farmer gave us access to his wholesale prices.

Photo 1: Heads of cheese ordered by the GFC.

This was my first experience of transacting directly with a food producer on behalf of a group of consumers. Through this direct supply relationship, my family gained a supply of delicious farm cheese, and I learned about the cheese itself: how to store it, and why it tasted much stronger in the winter than in the summer (seasonal changes in the cows' diets). Albeit unintentionally, I learned a strategy for accessing food from producers by asking the minimum order quantity needed for direct purchase and to access wholesale prices.

4.2.2 Beginning to organise

Our small, loosely formed group settled into direct purchase relationships with other suppliers, ordering on an *ad hoc* basis. As someone in our informal 'collective' decided it was time to order more, they initiated a new order. We collected orders from each other.

In 2008, my friend Hannah[26] asked to begin working with me on these group purchases. She felt there was a momentum building with direction and purpose, and she wanted to help coordinate orders. We knew we could access food from additional suppliers, but this would need additional organisation. We shared the work of ordering a wider range of products, running collections at our homes, but orders were still irregular.

We wanted more choice for the kinds of food we could access within our family food budgets, but we'd also had a 'turn to quality' (Ilbery & Maye, 2005b; Winter, 2003b) as we asked questions about the food itself. Hannah remembered her early motivations:

> I was trying to pay special attention to the kind of ingredients… in the things that I was… buying. So I would spend a lot of my time at the supermarkets reading the labels, trying to understand what's in it… I was trying to avoid consuming things that just had ingredients that I didn't want to consume.

4.2.3 Beginning of the purchase group

By 2009, we understood that our collective food orders, piecemeal as they were, were gaining momentum. At this time Hannah and I began calling our collective the Good Food Club.

At this early stage we fit the description of a 'purchase group', because our primary motivation for our collective purchases was the economic benefit of accessing quality food

[26] This name is a pseudonym.

for better prices (Schifani & Migliore, 2011). We'd begun a 'journey' (as later described by Hannah) to becoming the 'conscious consumers' Zoll (2018) describes, people trying to buy ethically-produced food outside of the MFC, but it wasn't our driving motivation.

Others began asking if they could join our collective buying endeavours. Hannah and I were happy to let them join us, because we were learning that the more people buying together, the bigger our collective spend. The larger group size was the catalyst for role differentiations. Hannah and I took roles as leaders (hereafter called 'conveners') and the people buying together with us we called 'members'. As the two conveners doing this work on behalf of the group, we decided it was fair to add a fee of 5% onto orders to cover costs and for our own profit. Over the next years, this fee was increased to 10%.

In effect, Hannah and I became gatekeepers for our closed purchase group. As members joined, we expected them to make regular purchases with the club. We didn't have criteria for what 'regularly' meant, nor did we have formalised membership criteria. However, we dropped members who bought irregularly or only bought one or two items.

4.2.4 GFC beginnings for members

Awareness of the group grew by word-of-mouth, via our members' social networks. This was similarly noted in a study of AFNs in the USA, although in that case, just over half of their participants joined via "word of mouth" through their social networks. In the case of our GFC and throughout its history until present, people asked to join, and we never advertised for members.

In the interviews each member was asked their reasons for joining the GFC, without being prompted by examples. Each interviewee gave multiple responses (for an overview see Table 1).

The reasons for joining varied. Three members expressed agreement with the overall ethos of the GFC. They acknowledged their own food ethics to be held within a nascent awareness of the multiple factors comprising ethical food production, distribution, supply, and purchase; and that the GFC seemed to embody the principles they were beginning to want to support. As Sal put it, "I think that for me the Good Food Club just summed up so many things that I was starting to find important about food."

Reason for joining the GFC	Louise	Catherine	Sal	Jessy	Rachel	Stuart	Kim
General ethos of GFC			X		X		X
To have a better understanding of the food they were consuming						X	
To purchase food 'closer to production'		X		X			
To be part of an alternative to shopping at supermarkets	X	X				X	
To buy quality and/or products at better prices than formal retailers	X			X			
To support local producers	X						
To support farmers	X		X				
To support good farm production methods			X		X		X
To support good treatment of all people involved in supply chain			X		X		
Buying ethically farmed meat			X		X		X
To support use of less environmental resources in distribution of food					X		
To help organise household food expenditure						X	
Religious motivation	X						
Joining strongly influenced by personal connection with convener	X		X			X	
Proactively asked to join the GFC because of exposure through active members		X		X	X		X

Table 1: Reasons members joined the GFC[27]

Stuart could be included in this group of newly conscious consumers, although he spoke more widely about why he (and his wife) joined, saying that they wanted "to have a better understanding of the food that we are buying." He went on to say he wasn't motivated by wanting access to the products themselves, but by the suppliers, and "who the suppliers are."

Catherine and Jessy wanted to buy food 'closer' to its source of production. Catherine juxtaposed closing this distance with not going to supermarkets.

Two interviewees spoke about the desire to be "part of something different", meaning buying food outside of the MFC. When asked his reasons for joining, Stuart's response:

> I think, the way we buy things, I suppose, has always been just … doing what everybody is doing, you know? The supermarket just is the easy option, but actually starting to think about alternatives and... different ways of doing it...

[27] Members' names are pseudonyms.

Two members primarily wanted access to quality products. They wanted to buy quality food at optimal prices. Jessy, who had been accessing food at niche retailers (e.g., health shops), specifically highlighted her desire for buying quality food for cheaper prices.

Some wanted to support food production and distribution in which people and animals are treated ethically. Sal spoke of an equitable economic model in which all people at work along the supply-chains of the food she buys are treated “justly”; and secondary, but also important, that animals are farmed with kindness. Rachel expressed her discomfort with the way people and animals are treated within the MFC and added her discomfort with the way the earth’s finite resources are treated as well.

Stuart was the only person to say he joined to help track his household food expenditure: for “a bit of assistance in food budgeting, because it kind of gave us a marker of monthly spend.”

Three people acknowledged that their friendship with Hannah or me also factored strongly in drawing them into the purchase group. Through interactions as friends, our overlap of values led to them joining. Louise spoke the most strongly about joining so she could support me in this initiative.

Louise is also the one person who spoke about the GFC as a way to express her Christian beliefs. We had been in a small group Bible study at the time, and she remembers me speaking of my desire to use “buying power” to “buy ethically.” This impelled her to join the GFC: “my memory is that it was… a spiritual prompting.”

Four people requested joining after exposure to the GFC through their friends who were already active GFC members. These social connections as influencers and pathways into the group are important to note. Even if not deliberately, we started the GFC in the way it would continue. The primary way that people join the current GFCs now a decade later is still through social connections.

4.2.5 GFC beginnings for suppliers

As we continued with orders from 2009 to 2010, Hannah and I sought new products to order, often prompted by what we wanted for our own homes. We approached a Fair Trade coffee supplier of African-grown beans, a mozzarella producer, and a butchery based in another province. One member was providing business coaching for a new soup producer who began supplying us. We also widened our range to include home cleaning and body care products.

The suppliers interviewed began with the GFC via different avenues:

- An existing supplier referred one;
- A friend referred one;
- We met one at a rural farmers' market;
- A member referred one;
- Two came from 'cold approaches', whereby Hannah and I identified products we wished to buy, and then approached those suppliers requesting their supply;
- The newest supplier that I interviewed was referred by one of the other GFCs whom they were supplying.

As we developed, supply relationships didn't always stick. Either we dropped suppliers because we weren't happy with the products or supply chain, or they weren't easy to work with; or suppliers dropped us, usually because our orders weren't large enough, or they found our logistical constraints difficult to accommodate.

4.2.6 Beginning to share vision and values

As we interacted with suppliers over successive orders, learning about the goods we were buying from them, Hannah and I accumulated information, which formed and deepened our values. We'd begun to see our collective as offering an alternative for food purchasing away from supermarkets. We wanted the GFC to grow both in numbers of members and suppliers that we purchased from.

Because most of our communication with members occurred via email and short face-to-face interactions with collections, we wanted to give members the opportunity to gather socially, hear about our emerging vision, and interact directly with some suppliers. In their research about responsible consumption communities (RCCs) in Spain, Papaoikonomou and Ginieis (2017) described the collective's 'sharing events', as activities designed to help producers and consumers interact (p. 58). In April 2010, we hosted our first sharing event, what we called a

Tasting Evening at a local church hall. We asked suppliers to send representatives who could speak about their goods, and we asked them to put out samples that could be tasted. Over one hundred people attended, and most suppliers sent samples and information, if not representatives.

I remember preparing for the evening, thinking that my passion for this collective food provisioning was almost visceral, too new to be fully formed in my understanding. I knew I needed to speak about our vision to the members gathering, but I told Hannah I didn't know how to articulate how much I guessed to be wrong with the MFC, how ignorant I was about the supply-chain of food coming to my family's table. I organised my thoughts into what I called a 'theology of food'. "For me, it all begins, and continues with my faith. I have a theology of food." I explained that when my family sits at our table, I want to know that the food on our plates was provided with respect for the earth, the environment, people, and animals. I mentioned the desire to support farmers, and I spoke about systemic concerns:

> I want to know that fair financial exchange was made, that my payment supported the grower/producers more than the many middle-players, and especially more than the supermarkets.

This is the first time Hannah and I articulated, for ourselves and members, values about the food we wanted to buy, and the producers we wanted to support; it's also the earliest reference to understanding our collective consumption as activism to benefit our wider society.

We hosted a second Tasting Evening in September 2011, the last such gathering. They were important for building a common values basis and social cohesion in the group, and for framing our collective purchases within a wider vision.

4.2.7 Organising further

In these early years, Hannah and I had conversations about dividing the work of the buying club between members. We hoped a member from each household would take responsibility for liaising with a supplier. I had heard of such buying groups in Cape Town, whereby they would meet for a scheduled dinner, and each member would bring the group order they had organised from their designated supplier. This high member participation was similar to SPG ideals in Italy, as documented by Schifani and Migliore (2011) and Grasseni (2014); but they focused on accessing speciality health ingredients. When our GFC was starting they no longer existed.

However, our members, for the most part working professionals, were content to outsource the work of liaising with suppliers and organising orders to Hannah and me. Our members are an over-scheduled sub-section of Cape Town's population who don't believe they have much time to contribute to GFC operations. As one member said, "I wouldn't be able to work you know *and* [EMPHASISED] do this."

4.2.8 Financial responsibility and trust

Because we were effectively employed by members to run the buying club, Hannah and I were responsible for paying suppliers. Members paid into my personal bank account, and I paid suppliers from there. By paying suppliers via a centralised bank account, GFC have organised in a similar way to Italy's GAS (Fonte, 2013).

We arranged with suppliers to pay them after deliveries, so we had time to invoice our members for payment. Because we'd heard too many accounts of how slow supermarkets are to pay their suppliers, we felt it was important to pay suppliers as quickly as possible. We aimed to pay suppliers within a week of delivery, if possible; but at most, within two weeks of delivery.

If suppliers delivered orders in good faith, they needed to be paid in full, regardless of whether members paid or not. Our GFC could run only as much as we trusted our members to pay their invoices promptly, and as much as our suppliers trusted us to pay them soon after delivery. This need for trust caused us to add members to the group only whom we believed we could trust to pay faithfully. This kept the social connections close to Hannah and me. People either came in via direct connection to one of us, or they came in via someone who was already a member who could vouch for trustworthy character.

Hannah and I developed strong boundaries with members who were slow to pay. We dropped some members who didn't pay promptly.

4.2.9 Market days as central routinised practice

The *ad hoc* nature of our orders meant that people were making many car trips to collect food from our homes. Hannah and I wanted to minimise the fuel used in our activities. Also, with additional members and suppliers increasing the administrative demands for organising orders, it began to make sense to have rhythm and schedule. We began bundling activities together, running orders from multiple suppliers to be collected over a two-day period. This worked well, such that we then consolidated collections on one day per month.

We organised the first 'market day'—a day for consolidated order collections—from my home in late 2012. With food spread around my house, people came and gathered their individual orders. Hannah and I worked together to run monthly market days, always on Fridays, moving between our homes. We then settled on Hannah's home because it was the bigger house. (See Photo 2 for a picture of goods set out for collection at market day.) At our February 2013 market day, there were nine agrifood businesses supplying the club, and 46 participating households that bought goods worth an average of ZAR347 per household. (See Table 2 for a comparison of GFC purchase activity for February market days, 2012–2016.)

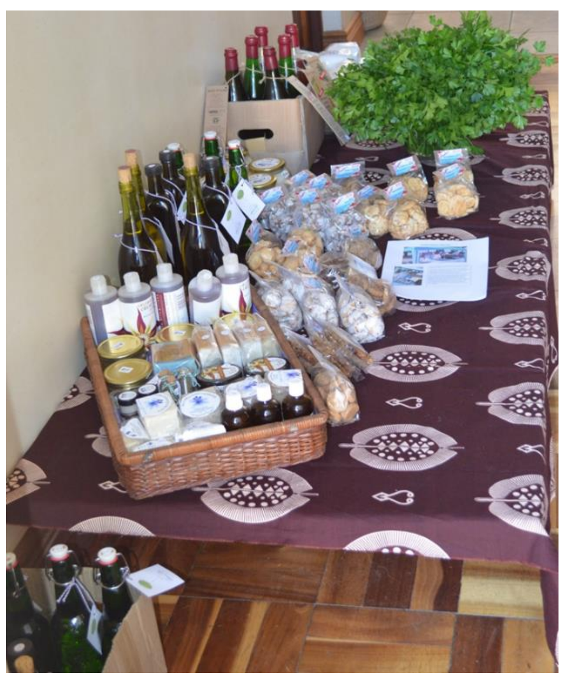

Photo 2: Goods ready to be collected at market day.

The major components of the constitutive phase are evident here: the division of tasks and responsibilities, the seeking new products to purchase together, and the development of relationships between members and with suppliers.

4.2.9.1 Market days give structure for communication

With more regular ordering and collection cycles, Hannah and I settled into the rhythms and role delineations. Hannah communicated with existing and potential suppliers: learning about them, vetting them, and getting necessary information for ordering. I ran administrative systems for orders: communicating with members, organising, and collating individual orders, submitting orders to suppliers, running the order collections on market days, invoicing members, and paying suppliers.

We opened a dedicated email account in early 2013, from which we both communicated. The primary mode of communication with members and suppliers continues to be email. Email is an efficient conduit of logistical and operational communication. This is common to other AFN, for example Italy's *GAS* (Brunori et al., 2012; Fonte, 2013).

4.2.9.2 Market day logistics

All goods distributed at market days were pre-ordered by members. On market days, Hannah and I spent the mornings receiving and organising deliveries. From a set time, usually noon, members came to gather their orders. With the growing number of suppliers, and with the wider variety of products, one of us had to 'final check' each person leaving with their goods to ensure they left with exactly what they ordered. Some items came packaged in different sizes, some items were made by different suppliers, and some labels had other variations. The person tasked with final checking needed to ensure the correct food left with the correct people.

4.2.9.3 Market day costs

We realised that there were costs for running market days, such as food for those working during the long day, electricity for refrigeration, ice for cold storage, petrol for errands, airtime, and data. In addition to our mark-up, Hannah and I began charging a market day fee for any household that ordered, which contributed to the direct costs of running market days. When we began, that fee was R15 per household, and currently it is R25.

4.2.9.4 Exercising membership as market day volunteers

Hannah and I wanted to encourage participation in the work of the collective, to nurture a culture in which members had agency and ownership. We offered opportunities to volunteer at market days as a way to participate in a routinised activity: receiving and sorting deliveries, helping during collections, or cleaning up at the end of the day. Those who volunteered had their market day fee waived.

4.2.9.5 Market days promoting information and social cohesion

Hannah worked to create a market atmosphere at market days. For each market day, she organised samples from existing or potential suppliers (see Photo 3 below) and made space for additional items that people could purchase when they came to collect orders. This to expose members to suppliers, potential suppliers and their products, and to create an atmosphere conducive to socialising. Hannah reminisced: "I just remember… the days when we used… inside my house… and it was just festive and homey and warm and welcoming. And people were chatting to each other."

Photo 3: Cheese samples put out for tasting at market day.

Market days are structured in the same way to this day. The demarcated time and space for members to gather for collections is an important opportunity to nurture group social cohesion while exposing members to product and supplier information.

4.2.10 GFC Values first written

Until 2013, we were growing in our awareness and understanding of what ethical food purchasing entails, but other than speaking to members about a 'theology of food' (Section 4.2.6), we hadn't explicitly listed our values. We informally communicated values in emails to members, but we weren't working from a consolidated list.

Hannah and I decided it was time to list the values driving our decisions about what we purchased, from whom we purchased, and how we organised ourselves. We met to do this in 2013. Hannah captured the values into writing:

> **Supporting local farmers, producers, and suppliers**: We want to support farmers and producers who are local to our region, or as close as possible.
>
> **Just treatment of employees**: We want to support farmers and producers who uphold the dignity of their workers/employees and pay them a fair wage.
>
> **Ethical farming and husbandry methods**: We value and support farming methods that are kind and considerate to the environment and the livestock.
>
> **Source good wholesome food and produce**: We want to find good, wholesome food and produce, which we distribute within the club. We like to source organic produce whenever possible, when it is available locally.
>
> **Relational**: We value our relationships with each other as club members, so having a cap on the number of households is important. And we value our relationships with the producers we buy from.
>
> **Community**: Building a sense of community within the club is important. It is helpful to decide on a geographical area and keep club membership within that area. Out of this food club network other things can grow and develop like advocacy, awareness, cooking clubs or gardening clubs, for example.
>
> **Access and Empowerment**: We want to equip people with information that assists them in making good choices as consumers and giving people access to good food across the socio-economic spectrum.

4.2.11 The need to transfer value-laden information from conveners to members

As conveners, Hannah and I were rapidly gathering more information and understanding about generalities and specifics governing the different aspects of our food supply. Our interactions with our suppliers made us privy to information about them, their products, and food system realities. This provoked questions we would then research. With our growing store of information about the supply-chain, we often spoke about how this information impacted our values.

In the interview, we discussed different strategies we've had for sharing this value-laden information with our members. But the information we were collecting was ongoing, overwhelming in volume, and therefore, not easily transferred to our members without giving time and effort to this communication.

Our main strategies were to share information though emails sent to the group, and through conversations that occurred at market day. However, we found market days too busy for many conversations. We settled on taking a long view, making supplier and product information available for optional reading, including information from suppliers in our regular emails, and sharing from our own values.

4.2.12 Vetting potential members

As we developed, we wanted to draw people into the group who would agree with our values matrix. We wanted them to affirm the vision that by putting our collective purchases behind chosen suppliers we were building into a better food economy. We didn't want to draw people who viewed the GFC as a boutique retailer, and therefore would only buy a few of the high-end items at an optimal price. We wanted people to understand themselves as part of something bigger.

We were on a journey of consciousness ourselves, and we had the same grace for other members to embark on that same journey. But it seemed important to learn why people wanted to join, and then reject requests when they didn't seem to have potential to align with our vision. In her interview, Kim reminded me we informally vetted people, something she experienced personally when she had asked to join the GFC via her friends who were members. She understood that we were trying to find "like-minded individuals" who would "accept the ethos" of the GFC.

We learned to consider requests to join only if the person asking contacted either Hannah or me directly. We noticed that people who joined by third party referral never became active members. Hannah or I explained the working ethos of the GFC; or we would ask the member to explain if the request was coming through a connection with an active member.

If people joined and didn't purchase regularly, we weeded them from the email group list, or we communicated with them to end their membership. Hannah and I held the power in these decisions.

4.2.13 Ordering system move to foodclub.org

For the first years, we ran all orders via an increasingly complex and unwieldy set of spreadsheets. By February 2014, we had 55 members, and the number of suppliers was 19, double the number twelve months earlier. The average spend per household at the market day was ZAR1000. (See Table 2 for a comparison of GFC purchase activity for February market days, 2012–2016.)

That month, we began using an online ordering platform designed by someone in the USA. We registered each member on the system with a user-name and password. (Initially the use of this system was free, but in 2015 the system designer began charging a half-percent of all revenue.)

Hannah and I were interested that this IT-platform was used by purchase groups with organisational needs like ours. For example, it allowed us to assign weights (e.g., for cheese or meat) for individual accounts. Without external advice and guidance, our GFC had developed in similar ways to the US-based groups using this platform, suggesting commonalities between the GFC and international AFN counterparts.

4.2.14 Community Supper donations

In early 2015, Hannah and I met with two other GFC members. We understood the food we were buying as the GFC was inaccessible to many people because of cost. We wanted our activities to benefit people with less money. From this brainstorm, we created the opportunity for members to donate money for this purpose. My family was part of a weekly meal with our church community at which most of our fellow diners were homeless. We gave members the option to donate money to sponsor meals when they made their monthly GFC orders. Hannah and I committed to ensure all donations would buy ethically-produced ingredients. ZAR1650 came in the first month (April 2015), enough donations to cover 110 meals. This donation has continued every market day since the first time. By the end of 2019, GFC members had contributed ZAR109,000, paying for meat, grains and produce—mostly from GFC suppliers.

4.2.15 New GFC starts

Over time, more people asked to join the GFC. By 2015, we were hosting market days from Hannah's newly refurbished garage. Hannah and I deliberated about what was the ideal number of households for our GFC. We needed to be large enough to gather sizeable orders, but we couldn't become too large to be operationally unwieldy for market days. We believed the social cohesion within the group was important, but that it would be diluted if the group became too large. Because it was difficult to reject people who wished to join, we kept growing.

We finally stopped accepting new members by the February 2015 market day when we had 70 member households. By then, the average household spend had slightly increased from the year before, but the number of suppliers had increased from 19 to 27.[28] (See Table 2 for a comparison of GFC purchase activity for February market days, 2012–2016.)

In response to closing the club for new members, the first offshoot of the GFC was started in a different suburb. This new, independent GFC was started by a member to accommodate people who couldn't join our closed GFC.

When I spoke at a gathering of people interested in joining this new club, I named accessing quality food at wholesale prices as a benefit; but it is worth noting what else was valued at this point in our history:

> … the direct relational contact between the food on our families' tables and the people who are labouring to produce it… our food buying has become much more relational, and not only transactional… the joy of supporting small local food producers… we are able to gather a substantial order for most of our suppliers. We're pretty low maintenance, and we are good fast payers… a benefit which has been indirect… has been the social aspects of coming together each month over our food orders.

The new GFC convener structured her club for the most part in the same way as the original, but with minor differences: she developed her own ordering platform, she used a third party's

[28] Note: Not every household ordered every month. Although there were 70 member households, 65 households placed orders for the February market day.

home for market days, and she added a higher mark-up (10-15%). This new GFC continues to exist to this day.

4.2.16 Original GFC splits because of VAT

By the February 2016 market, the average expenditure per household had increased by one-third from the previous year, to ZAR1560 per household. (See Table 2 for a comparison of GFC purchase activity for February market days, 2012–2016.)

February Market Day	number of households in the order	total turnover	number of suppliers	Items being bought
2013	46	ZAR 15,974	9	Eggs, butter, deli meats, honey, jam, coffee, flour, beer, pesto, rooibos, cheese, meat, olive oil
2014	55	ZAR 5,1974	19	In addition: chicken, wine, home-made biscuits, nuts, fresh produce, muesli, flowers
2015	70	ZAR 63,454	27	In addition: chocolate, grains, cereals & pantry staples, household & body care products, soup
2016	70	ZAR 109,220	33	Same as above

Table 2: Comparison of GFC purchase activity for February market days, 2012–2016

The volume of food being moved at market days had become difficult to manage within the space of Hannah's carport. However, we soon realised this wasn't our most pressing challenge.

In early 2016, one member, a chartered accountant, began asking us about VAT.[29] Hannah and I were unaware of the VAT-threshold, and therefore ignorant of our GFC's standing regarding VAT. In Hannah's interview, we laughed when remembering our ignorance about

[29] Value-Added Tax (VAT) is a tax on goods and services. At that time VAT was 14%; in 2018 it increased to 15%.

VAT regulations. What we thought were casual questions from this member became the basis for a major transition for our GFC—and for Hannah and me.

We learned that our annual revenue exceeded the VAT-threshold of R1 million in revenue per annum, therefore we couldn't continue without either registering as VAT-vendors, or somehow decreasing the club's annual revenue to stay below the threshold. This caused us to split the GFC into two new clubs. I ran a GFC from a church hall in my community, and Hannah continued a group from her home. We put the split to the group, asking members to commit to the group that would be most convenient for them geographically. In October 2016, we ran our first separate market days as GFC-X and GFC-Y.

4.3 GFC moves toward solidarity purchase group

When Hannah and I began the GFC, our main objective was to access good food at wholesale prices. The motivation of our own economic advantage identified us as a 'purchase group' (Grasseni, 2013; Schifani & Migliore, 2011). As we purchased directly from more producers, we became aware of problems with the country's retail agrifood system. We saw that long supply-chains created social and economic distance between food producers and consumers, as discussed by Kloppenburg et al. (1996). We felt we'd been passive consumers in our food system, in which, as Greenberg (2017) and Ledger (2016) described, corporate food retailers and processors control food supply, from food choices to prices. Given our growing understanding of the dominant food system, we wanted to close the distance between producer and consumer, promoting a sustainable food economy in which "economic transactions are embedded in social relationships" (Grasseni, 2013, p. 72).

We simultaneously became aware of the negative impact implicated in the combination of poverty, supermarket dominance, and the nutrition transition. As Hannah and I awakened to the gross imbalances and problems with South Africa's—and the world's—MFC, our motivations shifted from being primarily interested in our own economic benefit, to a desire to be part of creating an alternative food system. That this shift had begun was already evident by what I said at our Tasting Evenings.

We began to frame our purchase group activity as action not only to agitate for change, but to put our consumer power to work for the common good. This movement to consciousness, manifesting as activism, is consistent with global literature of similar food provisioning strategies, e.g. *GAS* in Italy (Corsi & Novelli, 2016; Schifani & Migliore, 2011). As we have grown in our collective consciousness about our purchasing activities, we now more accurately call ourselves a 'solidarity purchase group' (SPG), the difference being the underlying motivations driving our values: to participate economically in 'solidarity' with other actors in the food system, from producers to consumers (Grasseni, 2014; Schifani & Migliore, 2011) (see Figure 2). It was this desire to improve the world around us that defined us as an SPG, distinct from our purchase group beginnings.

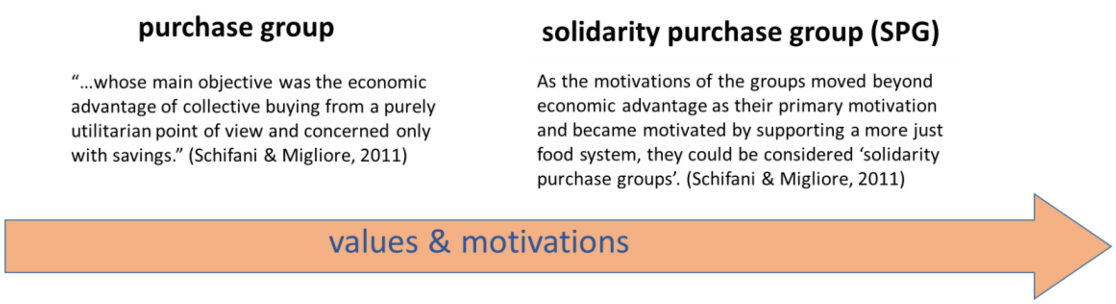

Figure 2: Values & motivations: Purchase group to solidarity purchase group (image author's own)

As a collective we have undertaken an ongoing process of deliberate conscientisation. We continue to move across the spectrum, an unending 'work-in-progress' on a journey into understanding. Our members share this consciousness to varying degrees, all at different places between purchase group and SPG on the spectrum, depending on their own motivations for participating in the GFC. It could also be surmised that a few members might have little enough alignment with our broader vision such that they would still understand themselves to be part of a purchase group.

4.3.1 The Good Food Club as an SPG in Cape Town

SPGs as they're structured in Italy's *GAS* divide their supplier purchases and collections between members (Forno et al., 2015; Grasseni, 2014). Our GFCs have developed with a different structure, whereby it is the convener of each group who coordinates and controls the supply interactions. They add on margin for profit—although small in relation to formal retail mark-ups—so in effect are employed by members to organise orders and invoices. The group members rely on the coordinator of their GFC to vet suppliers according to their values matrix.

This difference raises the question as to whether these groups can be considered SPGs, even if achieving many of the same outcomes (e.g., short supply-chains, supporting vetted suppliers, creating relational transactions based in social cohesion and trust). Our GFC operating structures are manifestly different, but our activism comes from similar motivations, seeking the same ends. We have adapted to a particular peri-urban context of Cape Town. I propose that we are SPGs in spirit and outcome—if not in structure.

4.4 Intermediate growth phase

In the 'intermediate growth phase' of development, SPGs expand and broaden their provisioning actions (Migliore et al., 2013). They also support the formation of new SPGs, by giving advice and sharing knowledge. The network itself interacts with other "actors in the local area with a view to sharing, principles, ideals, and objectives", albeit without clear planning or agendas (Migliore et al., 2013, p. 553).

4.4.1 GFC multiplication

A fourth GFC was started in February 2017 by members of the original GFC, a married couple with small children. Between November 2017 and the end of 2019, seven more clubs were started, totalling eleven. With one exception, each had a close connection to an existing GFC, whether by membership or by close connection with the convener.

There are core commonalities in each GFC, but there are also differences. Each GFC uses market days as their central routinised practice, and runs communication by a combination of emails, internet ordering platforms, and WhatsApp messages.

In a similar way to the vast *GAS* networks of Italy, each group has cultivated its own focus and culture, giving different weight to different values as priorities (Fonte, 2013). These differences are determined by the values or purposes prioritised by the group conveners themselves. At a network meeting in July 2019, the gathered conveners attempted to list the core values common to the network. We found that this would become an ongoing discussion, but from my fieldwork diary the next day I wrote:

> We agree on everything, but… [Convener X] added 'health' as a value. That's her primary motivator because of her own health issues. After the meeting, Hannah and I confessed to each other that health isn't really even on our values list… each group has its own non-negotiable values, and the others fall into line as important but negotiable to varying degrees.

4.4.2 Good Food Clubs as a network of SPGs in Cape Town

As new autonomous GFCs formed, the conveners began seeking ways to support each other and share information. Emails and WhatsApp messages were used to communicate day-to-day, and then as the fifth and sixth GFCs were launched, conveners started meeting together. We decided to schedule quarterly meetings; however, they have occurred far less regularly that that, and it is rare to have each convener present. Meeting minutes are disseminated, with much discussion about meeting topics happening over the established channels of communication.

Hannah believes she benefits from the network of GFCs, from hearing conveners shared interests and challenges. Over the years, as her growing family has demanded more of her time, she hasn't been able to stay up on of new information. She appreciates hearing other conveners share about their experiences with suppliers—"what they've read, or what they're learning." She finds it especially helpful to hear about starting with new suppliers, something that can generate stress for conveners as the new relationships are established. "When there are new suppliers, I like to watch people's experiences. [LAUGHS] I like sitting in the background sneakily watching. I give it a few months and then decide if that's something that I want to pursue or not."

In fact, for every convener it has become an enormous task to keep abreast of information about specific suppliers (potential and existing), production and distribution methods, sub-sectors of the food supply industry, and local and global supply chains. Sharing the work of gathering information has boosted conveners' capacity in their commitment to learning about the food system. I wrote about this in an essay for the applied theology course I did:

> It can be overwhelming to understand the complexities of our local food economy. We can try to make the most ethical choices, but unless we are informed of the realities, we

> might not be making the good choices we think we're making. Sharing information between solidarity food purchase groups is one of the most effective ways we can all be well-informed … We are not competing with each other. We need to share information together for the good. (Essay written for Leadership in Urban Transformation certificate course, University of Pretoria, 2017)

These firsts eleven GFCs in Cape Town are formalising the network. At present we are drafting a charter that we will each sign. From the network meeting on 30 July 2019, the minutes have the basics of the charter as:

> We are going to encourage new groups not to use the name Good Food Club. Many more groups called GFCs will become too confusing to suppliers.
>
> They won't be part of our formal network - although our network will interact with other groups and networks.
>
> We want to mentor new groups forming in understanding themselves as solidarity purchase groups, as part of a solidarity economy.

Some conveners are mentoring new SPGs, in line with the decisions above.

At present, conveners interact with other actors active in the local food economy. This tends to be a response to desires to learn more about the existing food chain, for example farmers pioneering more ethical methods, watchdog organisations, and academics working in relevant fields.

4.5 Mature Phase

The 'mature phase' of SPG development sees a cohesive network strategy to impact the food system and structures for the greater good (Migliore et al., 2013). This is achieved by concretising the groups, and by engaging in collaborative initiatives. Barbera and Dagnes (2016) suggest that collaboration is needed between different AFNs "in order to compensate for their weaknesses and enhance each other's strengths" (p. 331).

We have not moved to the mature phase, but I mention it here as a statement of intent. In our network meetings, we speak about our hope to use our scale to leverage larger movement of farm produce to urban consumers, to strengthen targeted farmers, benefit network consumers, and give people with less money access to this food. We speak about future hopes to use our combined power to influence policy governing the food supply-chain.

Our long-term intention is to use our growth and expansion in the most strategic ways possible for the common good.

Chapter 5: GFC members and suppliers

In this chapter, I share more interview findings, and discuss how members and suppliers described their GFC in the GFC as an AFN.

5.1 Who GFC members are

Every person in member households can be active in the GFC. However, in households of two or more, usually one person is the most active in the GFC (e.g., ordering, communicating, volunteering, or collecting at market days). The people I interviewed are the most active in their households.

I interviewed six women and one man. Two aren't employed by personal choice, although their spouses were employed. The others are formally employed in a variety of professions.[30]

When interviewed in 2019, the average household amount spent on groceries per person per month[31] ranged from ZAR1,830 to ZAR3,500 (ZAR2,647 average). Six members said they didn't know offhand how much their household food budget was, therefore, they had to do calculations and look at their expenditure records to give this information. One person gave an amount which I carefully queried. She was the fourth member interviewed, and her stated amount seemed unrealistically low compared to the preceding interviewees, and to what I knew were her average GFC monthly expenditures. She came back to me after the interview to say her initial given amount was in fact only two-thirds of the correct total.

Most members interviewed were sheepish when telling how much they spend on food each month. It was clear they judge their grocery expenditure to be too high, and they are not comfortable with the amounts. As Catherine was about to state her family's monthly grocery expenditure, she prefaced with: "Oh, I feel so much shame!"

Their GFC expenditure averages from 20% to 50% of their total household food budget.[32] Kim said she seldom shops at supermarkets anymore now that she's part of the GFC. But she

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[30] The co-founder, Hannah, is technically a member, but I interviewed her as a key-informant. She's a qualified social worker, but stopped formal employment the period immediately preceding her GFC involvement.

[31] Refers to total grocery expenditure, of GFC expenditure is a portion.

[32] These food budgets include household cleaning and body care provisions.

emailed me after the interview to say that she had gathered numbers from her family and learned that her family spends much more at supermarkets than she had previously thought. Most members expressed surprise at how much less the GFC proportion of their total food budget was compared to what they had assumed it to be. Jessy expressed disappointment that her GFC percentage wasn't higher.

What do these food budgets reveal about the member households represented in these interviews? In South Africa, access to food depends on household income. The ZAR2,647 average monthly food budget per person for GFC member households is an indicator of high household incomes relative to other Capetonians. This specific figure shows in stark contrast to the ZAR631 per person needed to buy a basic nutritional food basket for the month that is unaffordable to 61.5% of Capetonians.[33] The members interviewed represent the 35% of people in South Africa who can afford sufficient food to sustain nutritious diets.

Another indicator of members' wealth was that six interviewees had to examine their records to be able to give a monthly estimate for food expenditure, suggesting they don't have to budget carefully for food.

5.2 Who GFC suppliers are

GFC-X and GFC-Y share most of the same suppliers, currently over thirty suppliers. The six suppliers interviewed represent various types of businesses - for example, producer and intermediary, food and non-food, rural and urban-based (for an overview see Table 3).

The seven suppliers represented various modes for selling their goods. They're wholesale distributors (two with their own retail shops), or they sell via small retail shops, online sales, direct informal sales to consumers, markets, restaurants, and industry. Only one business supplied a supermarket, and another was pitching to a supermarket chain at the time of the interview. Another supplier spoke about his business as "unfortunately" too small to supply supermarkets. The remaining four were uninterested in supplying supermarkets.

[33] This figure is derived from the BFAP estimate for a 'thrifty healthy food basket'. (See Chapter 2 for more information). ZAR2524 is calculated to feed four people for a month. (This estimate is based on feeding two adults and two children, so in fact to average R631/per person is not completely accurate but is close enough for this purpose.)

GFC Suppliers interviewed						
	Primary type of product/s supplied	**Producer/ Intermediary**	**Employees: Full-time permanent**	**No. of Employees: Casual**	**Rural/Urban**	**Black-owned**
Ruth	Home and body cleaning products	Producer (*they contract factory production)	2	3 (1 part-time; 2 on contract)	Urban	Yes
Jim	Dairy products & meat	Producer (Farm)	12	5	Rural	No
Stefan	Chocolate	Producer	15	5 (soon to be made full-time permanent)	Urban	No
Rita	Olive products	Producer (Farm)	6	80 (seasonal - during harvest)	Rural	No
Murray	Butchery: Wholesale & retail butchery	Intermediary (*produce some of their own products with insourced meat)	52	None	Urban	No
Alison	Dry goods wholesale & retailer	Intermediary (*produce some of their own products with insourced goods)	38	Unspecified number the 3 months of the Christmas period	Urban	No
Sharmaine	Wholesale farm produce	Producer (Farm)	8	2	Rural	No

Table 3: GFC Suppliers interviewed[34]

For five of the suppliers, their combined sales to GFC-X and GFC-Y account for 10% or less of their overall sales. For the other two suppliers: these GFC sales are 20% for one, and 30% for the other.

5.3 What are the benefits of GFC involvement for members?

Every member spoke positively about the benefits of GFC involvement. These benefits are group in five broad categories: Value-laden purchasing, economic, socially-embedded, supply-chain transparency, and agency (see Table 4 for an overview).

Renting et al. (2003) describe 'value-laden' purchasing as characteristic of [Northern] AFNs. Every member said this is a benefit of their GFC participation. Catherine called it "values-driven purchasing." She feels there is pressure on South Africa's middle class to "do good", that by buying food via the GFC she can use her money to do good, use her food budget to support her values. "I love being able to do good … with the money that I would've spent in

[34] Suppliers' names are pseudonyms.

any case… choosing where I spend that money is… important." Members specified a variety of values. (See Table 4 for those mentioned.)

Benefits of supply relationships as described by members interviewed		
	Broad grouping	**Breakdown**
1	**Value-laden purchasing**	Relationship-based purchasing; ethical treatment of animals; ethical or organic crop production; supporting local; supporting ethical; farmers benefit economically; farm labourers benefit ecconomically; better for the environment
2	**Economic**	Good money value for quality & wholesome products; good prices because of bulk-buying
3	**Socially-embedded**	Relational, being part of 'something', a more more pleasant way to shop, communal, fellowship
4	**Supply chain transparency and trust**	Trusts that the conveners are vetting suppliers and products; trusts the suppliers; knowledge of the products; knowledge of the supply chain
5	**Agency**	Offers an alternative to the supermarkets as a mode of purchase, and alternative food choices.

Table 4: Benefits of GFC supply relationship as described by members

Five people valued the economic benefit they experience, the 'value for money' aspect that Schifani and Migliore (2011) say drives purchase group participation. They framed this within a 'turn to quality' as noted in the literature (Ilbery & Maye, 2005b; Winter, 2003b), being able to access better quality products for the price. Without factoring in quality, food purchased via the GFC isn't always cheaper than from the formal retail sector; but for the comparative quality, or "way better" quality of food, as Jessy phrased it, members perceive GFC prices to be better overall. As Catherine said, "I feel that I can get quality food at a much cheaper price than if I went to… [niche retailer]."

Three members rated the relational aspects of the GFC as beneficial. It's important to them that club business and transactions are socially-embedded as applied by (Migliore et al., 2013, p. 551). For Kim, "I love that it's communal—with people I know." Jessy likes "being part of something", that it's a "much more pleasant way" to buy food that "feels less consumer-ish." Catherine called this "relation-based purchasing", that it stems from the relationships between suppliers, conveners, and members:

> …Your relationship with suppliers, um, our buyers' relationship with you … you knowing where things come from. It feels more community-based, relationship-based, as opposed to completely impersonal, you know, going to Pick n Pay [supermarket].

Two members listed the trust they have in suppliers as a benefit; this because they believe the supply chains are more transparent. Stuart compared this with the supermarkets where he believes this level of transparency and trust is missing.

Some members believe the GFC gives them more agency as food consumers by offering a mode of buying food that avoids using supermarkets. They believe they also have greater choice in the food they can buy by having access to foods unavailable through supermarkets, or unaffordable through specialty retail shops.

5.4 What are the benefits of GFC involvement for suppliers?

I asked suppliers what they think are the benefits of supplying the GFC as compared to their other customers. There were five broad categories of supplier: access to conscious customers, values marketing, vehicle for consumer education, consolidated distribution, and economic (see Table 5).

Four suppliers benefit by supplying their products to customers with similar or shared values and ethics. Like the consumers described by Zoll (2018), these suppliers described such 'conscious customers' as "aware", appreciate quality, and want to trust the sources from whom they purchase—and therefore are more likely to buy the suppliers' products. According to Ruth, "People buy us. They don't just buy our product; they buy us and our intention." She believes her direct relationship with the GFC facilitates access to customers buying consciously. For Stefan, "You can try and market to a lot of people, but the message is not gonna land"—implying that the GFC gives him access to customers who will buy his products for ethical reasons.

Benefits of supply relationships as described by suppliers interviewed		
	Broad grouping	**Breakdown**
1	**Access to conscious consumers**	Customers with similar vision and values; customers who understand and appreciate quality; customers who are supporting the community by buying consciously
2	**Values marketing**	Their brand gets into homes; GFC is a trusted source, so word spreads about their products to others who wish to buy ethically produced goods
3	**Vehicle for consumer education**	Customers able to ask the suppliers questions; customers better able to learn about products; allows for easier communication between consumers and suppliers
4	**Consolidated distrubtion**	One-stop delivery - especially products coming from rural areas; orders
5	**Economic**	Regular and consistent orders; prompt payment; not much competition; loyal customers; enables job creation

Table 5: Benefits of GFC supply relationship as described by suppliers

Some suppliers seemed to value the 'conscious customer' not only for access to their custom, but because of their products going to consumers who share the same values. Rita said, "It's not just about the money for me. I have a similar vision in life [as GFC members]." She will reject certain market pathways, including supermarkets, if she doesn't agree with the ethics of the purchasing parties. Rita continued: "I will support like-minded people, even though there are some pitfalls to that... standing together [as producers and consumers]."

Murray feels tension balancing his desire to support his family and his desire to use his business to make a difference. "I think your members are choosing to support community because they are buying consciously. So, I think it's the kind of client that I personally feel our business wants to tap into."

A related benefit is 'values marketing'. Ruth compared supplying the GFC with distributing their products through retailers:

> People come [to a shop], and they don't know. They just see it, and sometimes they read it [the label], and then they will buy it…. Where the GFC comes in, your [members] know [about the product] … They trust your product.

While laughing, she then said, "And of course I don't have much competition [within the selection of GFC suppliers] compared to other wholesalers."

Rita believes such values marketing can move beyond the GFC to other potential customers, because they'll trust her products more if they hear that the GFC supplies her goods. Murray agrees: "People trust the Good Food Club. And I think basically we want people to trust our product."

Some suppliers value the GFC as a vehicle to educate consumers, increasing their consciousness. Speaking about the GFC, Stefan reflected, "It's a small, niche-enough group that we can work with and talk to and share our products." These conscious consumers are more likely to be receptive to his company's values. He said, "If you talk to communities of people who have the same interests, same values systems, all of that, it makes it easier … to communicate." Ruth and Rita expressed similar opinions.

Four suppliers—including all three of the rural-based interviewees—said the ability to consolidate distribution to multiple households with one drop-off is a benefit. Jim, whose farm is a four-hour drive from Cape Town, wouldn't be able to deliver to the "fifty or sixty customers that the Good Food Club is supplying" if he couldn't deliver their orders in a single drop. "Because we're delivering from such a distance, um, obviously distribution is a challenge… the Good Food Clubs work … for our set-up in terms of distribution." Sharmaine, also delivering from a rural area (see Photo 4), was emphatic: "Yours is a one-spot drop-off. That's a huge benefit that I don't have to do door-to-door."

Photo 4: One of the field’s on Sharmaine’s farm.

Given that the GFC makes up a small proportion of sales for five suppliers, I was particularly interested to hear the perceived economic benefits of supplying the GFC. For these suppliers, benefits are that the GFC orders consistently on a month-to-month basis, and that the GFC pays quickly and “never” gives problems with paying. One of the five said that cash flow is important in business, so a quick-paying customer is helpful.

Ruth said a specific benefit is that GFC income helps them employ a young man from her community. She lives and operates her business in a lower-income community and wants to create jobs for people in her community. When answering questions specifically about economic benefits of GFC supply, Sharmaine also highlighted that GFC business helps create job opportunities for people in their local farming community.

Finally, while the GFC relationship ultimately comprises financial transactions, Stefan described the GFC as a “low-maintenance customer”: “You’re actually a very, very easy customer.” Sharmaine liked that it’s a relaxed and understanding relationship on both sides, “not over-structured.” She said, “I just love the relationship.”

5.5 Challenges and problems of GFC participation for members

The monthly ordering and collection cycle of the GFC was the root of challenges as given by members. Most members spoke of the need for thorough planning when ordering provisions for the month. Jessy has improved in this: “You have to be organised. [LAUGHS] … you've gotta think a- ahead and kind of know what you're gonna need for a month. And I've got better at that." Rachel acknowledged that this challenge has motivated her to plan, which is a positive. But others spoke of how well things would go *if* they were better organised, *if* they'd plan menus that informed their ordering—but they haven't ever organised themselves enough to experience these positives. This was also a common admission in a recent study of Australian AFN participants (Turner, 2019).

Jessy finds market days themselves exhausting when one has big orders; she must gather her food, then unpack it when she gets home. Kim also finds the final-checking process at days exhausting. She recalled one time in the last year when her husband had collected, but then had to return three times with items to sort out the mistakes. Kim laughed remembering his irritation.

Rachel's cold storage capacity limits what she can buy. Lack of cold storage capacity can constrain bulk buying meat and dairy products for a month.

5.6 Challenges and problems of GFC supply relationship for suppliers

I asked suppliers what the problems were of supplying the GFC, and what changes they would want in the supply relationship. Responses varied, although for two suppliers with extensive product lists, they centred their issues on the ordering processes. In these two cases, both suppliers distribute to many of the existing GFC:

- For Murray, whose company now supplies most of the existing GFCs with meat products, it would help if they could centralise our group orders instead of running separate ordering processes for each GFC. He also raised this when chatting in the few minutes before the interview began. I reminded him that our groups had organised to work with one central price list, which set out standard ordering specifications and sizes. But I emphasized that, although our groups share information with each other, we would continue to operate autonomously and independently of each other.
- Alison, primarily a wholesaler, said it's difficult to communicate current price lists because of frequent price fluctuations in their own supply-line. GFCs have market

days on different days spread over each month, so it’s an administrative challenge to track price-lists applicable to the differing dates.

Jim noted the monthly nature of market days as a limitation when he doesn’t have enough stock to supply orders. If he under-supplies for a particular market day, he can’t send the replacement stock the following week—which he said he could do for health shops he supplies. He said a supply limitation is the production capacity of his cows: “We can only produce so much milk every day, and so you can only produce so much yogurt.”

The cut-off times for deliveries on market days can be difficult for Sharmaine’s business because they must travel from an outlying rural area, and often roadworks cause delays.

Rita, based in a rural area, leaves stock with the GFC once each month to sell on consignment. They deliver to Cape Town monthly to keep prices down for their customers. These deliveries rarely coincide with market days, and therefore members cannot pre-order their goods. Hannah and I have little household storage capacity, so the stock we can hold is limited. Rita wishes we could sell her full range, but she doesn’t have a solution for how to make this possible.

Rita’s bigger problem with the GFC is her lack of direct access to members to be able to educate them about the products and get their direct feedback. Information primarily must flow through the GFC convener. Her preferred platform for selling her products is markets because she can educate potential customers face-to-face. She also shared that her customers— “lots of them”—want to join a GFC when they hear about them from Rita. She says it’s a problem for her that most groups are closed to new members.

Chapter 6: Reflections on values – past and present

The history of the GFC is not merely transactional. Its development has been guided and influenced by the values of conveners, members, and suppliers, even as these values themselves have developed and transformed. One of the research aims was to examine members' values driving their GFC involvement, describing any movement along the values spectrum from purchase group to SPG (Schifani & Migliore, 2011).

This chapter presents interview findings about values, beginning with a discussion of values as liminal, complex, and interdependent. Members and suppliers will individually describe individual value constructs. The chapter concludes with discussion and analysis of these findings.

6.1 Values as liminal, complex, and interdependent

When Hannah and I started gathering people to order food together, our primary motivations of 'benefit to budget' identified us as a food 'purchase group' (Grasseni, 2013; Schifani & Migliore, 2011). Buying food directly from producers quickly became a portal for learning more about the food system. Interactions with additional suppliers over time meant that we became privy to more realities of their businesses. We became conscious that when we bought food, we were inextricably tied to the well-being of all the people involved in its production and distribution (Cook, 2006)—and not only to the business owner. This created the desire to know more about the supply-chain that food travelled to us, motivating us to source from small businesses where we could deal directly with owners or management.

Hannah and I began seeking closer production sources (or intermediary businesses if supply came from further afield)—with 'local' being as close to Cape Town as possible. In the last few years, our terms of local have become flexible as we've expanded our desired 'local' to the national scale of supporting South African farms ('South African local') in order to support the country's economy (Morris & Buller, 2003).

As we added more products to our orders over the years, packaging became a greater concern. We couldn't ignore the single-use plastic wrapped around too much of the food delivered to our market days.

These reflections show something of how the values guiding our food purchases formed and changed over time. I appreciated the way one member described the development of values as “leaky” in nature, liminal and shifting. She said, “I suppose it's the chicken and the egg: Where do you start?… I'm starting with… environmental issues that leak into the others, as opposed to others leaking into the environment.” She understands personal exposure to values as having permeable properties for influencing other values. They don’t stay static, they are personal—and as described below, they aren’t isolated.

We were constantly reassessing our priorities based on what seemed to us like moving targets, whether those metaphorical targets were new information, our own emotions about what we knew and understood, exposure to new suppliers, changes in current suppliers’ situations, or information voids. When making choices, we found that choosing values for primacy wasn’t a simple or linear process. We referred to our list of values as our ‘values matrix’ because the word ‘matrix’ represented the interdependence and complexity of the values to which we were awakening. The term ‘values matrix’ embodied the multifactorial, complex nature of defining and weighing the importance of different values against each other. But as Hinrichs and Allen (2008) point out, with strategies for just food distribution, the solutions rarely consider the complex layers of the systems moving our food from farm to mouth.

We also needed to communicate the complexities to our members. Hannah explained, “We've often spoken about that matrix, like talking about ethical choices, and… helping members understand why we choose certain suppliers… above others.” Some members grasped the ‘matrix’ facet of the values conversation. One member likened the values of ethical food supply as the tent poles holding up a tent: “If you take away a tent pole, then the whole thing collapses.” She insisted a pole can’t stand without the others, and therefore it’s impossible to prioritise one in isolation when they exist interdependently. She admitted, “I've just become more aware of how complex this all is.” Louise called this interdependence ‘a way of thinking’ that suppliers either have or don’t have. It was her contention that if a supplier has an ethical way of thinking, they would approach their business production and distribution with ethical standards as their goal. To her logic, if a supplier treats animals with respect, they will treat their employees with respect. Another described these “values to do with caring for the earth, the animals and the people involved in farming" as inseparable from one another.

Suppliers also expressed personal value-laden choices for running their businesses. One business prioritises a country's record for human rights abuses over choosing 'African local' sources of production ingredients; another prioritises producing a quality product above employment creation and therefore is choosing to increase mechanisation for certain production processes; and another prioritises sourcing non-GMO supply over every other value.

6.2 Values as discussed by GFC members and suppliers

In this section I examine values driving GFC involvement as discussed in the interviews. I discuss these values from the perspectives of Hannah, as a founder-convener, and then from the members and the suppliers.

6.2.1 Value of relationship, connection, and trust

A key feature of the GFC, as with any AFN, is the relational space created between consumers and suppliers for repeated interactions. In one interview question, it was proposed that the GFC's facilitation of direct relationships between members and suppliers is the foundational value rooting all the other values. In reality, Renting et al.'s (2003) delineations of relational proximity for actors on the GFC-side of the purchase interactions are different for the conveners than for members. The GFC relational connections run primarily between a GFC convener and members, and between the convener and suppliers, with the convener acting as intermediary between members and suppliers. Engagement with suppliers is 'face-to-face' (when directly with producers) or 'proximate' (when with intermediaries); when suppliers are intermediaries, the convener relationship with actual producers is 'extended'. For members, engagement with producers is 'proximate'. Below, I explore the dynamics created by these different relational positions.

GFC conveners interact with suppliers to organise orders, deliveries, and payments. The convener tries to engage directly with the producers of their food; when this isn't possible, interactions are with intermediaries. Relationships develop over time, shaped by multiple supply interactions. It was direct contact with suppliers that made Hannah appreciate the importance of maintaining the relationships. Hannah reflected, “I think how it plays out evolves all the time.” She values opportunities to learn about what she calls ‘the story of the food’ directly from suppliers:

> In an urban environment, I know so little about what I consume… it's so convenient going to a shop … where did it come from?… if it's stone-ground flour, why is it important that it's stone-ground flour, as opposed to just more processed flour in the shop? Being able to understand the difference… they're exactly the same product, but… how it was processed, and any additives is different… having contact with a farmer helped me understand and learn more about why it is better to use more sustainable forms of farming.

Direct contact enables her to better understand supply realities:

> … being aware of harvest times so that I'm not frustrated because my favourite kind of food is not available at a certain time of the year… the only way I was gonna change that and transform my own perspective and understanding was to actually have contact with the supplier. So, I felt like, personally for myself, it was a necessity.

She intends to communicate these ‘stories of the food’ to her members. “I wanted to grow, and I wanted to understand that for myself, so I could share that with others.” In this way, Hannah affirms that direct supplier contact realigns information symmetry (De Fazio, 2016), because it:

> … enables me to share more of the stories of the product… where it comes from, who the people are that are involved in the process… it connects me… I know it connects members to having a better understanding of when things are going well and when things are going badly.

Hannah doesn’t believe she can know the stories of her food if she’s purchasing from supermarkets. She described going to a shop and feeling “entitled” or frustrated when items are unavailable for purchase. “But I know nothing of the story behind why it's not there.”

Hannah believes her direct relationship with farmers is critical to helping her understand the true price of ethically farmed food:

> I know the story behind why things are going well, and why things are not going well… particularly, I think, with the chicken farmers. I've… been able to understand, for example, the pricing of why free-range chicken has been expensive… with one of the first chicken farmers that I had contact with--she was a free ranger farmer… that helped me understand… the [costs] of farming free range… I think that direct contact with a farmer helps me and my members understand things better. That's from a cost perspective.

She also described her relationship with farmers as critical to helping her understand context or problems with food supply (Little et al., 2010):

> …when we were getting chickens from [X], South Africa in the south coast… had a cold spell and… he lost 150 chicks, because it was just so hard to keep them warm. But the knock-on effect of that was that… when it came to that time [to slaughter] 7 weeks later… it meant that there wasn't enough chicken to buy.

Consistent with core features of AFNs, the repeated supply interactions between the GFC and its suppliers enables trust to build in the relationships (Hughes, 2005; Little et al., 2010; Sage, 2007). Connections with suppliers are built on reciprocal trust (Giampietri et al., 2018), or 'relations of regard' offered by Sage (2003), such that when working out pricing with suppliers, for Hannah there's a "level of trust between myself and the supplier." She trusts them to set the prices they need, not to "fleece" the GFC.

Hannah noted suppliers reciprocate this trust for payments because the convener pays supplier invoices after deliveries. She gave the example of one farmer who regularly under-invoices because of calculation errors. Laughing, she affirmed this shows an "incredible amount of trust" for him to know that she is always going to check over his invoices for mistakes.

Trust has become an essential component of these relationships, built through supply multiple interactions. "I can't imagine the relationship with the supplier… being healthy and good… without trust." In the early days, "when relationships were still young between the food club and the supplier," she had to inform suppliers of any delivery problems immediately. This has changed by relating with each other over time, building history, so that suppliers are more trusting.

Trust between Hannah and her members has built through social connections over time. She relies on her members to pay their market day invoices promptly. She also relies on the trust she has with her members, and trust with suppliers to broker the times there are problems with deliveries at market days. Once members leave market days with their goods, she says "there's a level of trust" in those relationships, so that if there are problems with goods, she can give feedback to suppliers, or she can facilitate the return or exchange of goods.

> When human error happens and… someone says they haven't received something... there's a certain level of trust between myself and the supplier, and between the group member and myself. That obviously the matter will be dealt with, and… that we're not gonna [LAUGHS] steal from the supplier.

6.2.1.1 Reflections from members

Members joined the GFC for the reasons stated in the previous chapter. If they valued the direct relationships, it was for the economic benefits they brought. They have come to value the relational benefits of the GFC transacting directly with suppliers. Jessy didn’t know about the convener’s direct supplier relationships when she joined, “but … within my first month, I was aware of it, and excited about it.” According to Louise, speaking to me as her group convener: “You… do communicate… that you are talking to suppliers, and that the whole ethos of Good Food Club is that it's a direct relationship with the producer versus third party.”

Members’ interactions with suppliers are usually indirect, and therefore proximity to suppliers is relational, as mediated through the convener (Renting et al., 2003). Rachel emphasised that these relationships are reliant on the conveners as intermediaries; she’s not fulfilling this direct relationship herself, “but I feel like I'm investing, you know, and committing in a space where there is someone doing that.” Speaking about the convener-supplier relationship, Sal said, “I don't feel I need to have an absolutely direct relationship myself… but I do need to know that those relationships are sound, and… are achieving what the Good Food Club stands for.” Stuart believes this proximity is such that quality and dimensions of the convener-supplier relationships transfer to members. He acknowledges that for members, “it's almost a lazy approach” but knowing the conveners have a good connection with suppliers is “enough” for him.

6.2.1.1.1. Connection, information and vetting

Members feel relationally connected to suppliers in two primary ways:

1. By having access to information about suppliers and their products, this information transmitted and mediated by the conveners. Every member was clear that the convener is the key mode of information transfer; and the convener’s relationship with the suppliers gives the member access to this information.

2. By their assumptions regarding the quality and frequency of the convener's relationship and contact with suppliers. The responsibility for maintaining the relationship, continually gathering information, and maintaining connection with suppliers lies with the conveners. Members assume their convener's relationships with suppliers to be positive, resulting in favour that flows to benefit members.

Connection brings more understanding of context about the suppliers and their products (Little et al., 2010). Members feel they generally have sufficient information about suppliers to make value-judgments, but they also voiced the desire for more information. This tension was evident when speaking about specific values. Members were asked if they had enough information about each value discussed to be sure that the suppliers were holding to those values. There were numerous cases when members admitted they weren't sure, or they didn't know if they had enough information. For example, Catherine didn't think she had enough information to be sure GFC suppliers ensure good treatment of animals. It's a priority value for her, but she admitted, "I've kind of given over my [LAUGHS] critical thinking to you, too much, actually." This displays trust transference to her convener; but also tacit acknowledgement that there is much more information to learn, because there are "big grey areas in that knowledge."

Rachel affirmed her desire for more information, although she acknowledged that it would require more work, which would fall to the convener. Stuart also wants more information, but he admitted that he struggles to organise and access the volumes of information he already has about suppliers, to use the information for making choices when ordering, or for communicating to others who might be interested in the information.

Every member (to varying degrees) assumes that conveners thoroughly vet suppliers for ethical standards before supplying the GFC. Kim trusts her convener does the "legwork" of vetting new suppliers. "I have no reason to doubt that," she said.

Six members stated their belief that vetting is diligent and ongoing. Some assume conveners visit suppliers, whether regularly or for "spot checks." Sal claimed, "I really do trust them because you vetted them very well, and you … continue to watch them." With an intermediary supplier butcher, Rachel stated her assumptions that he "hand picks farms" and he visits them annually.

However, there was one outlier, Kim, who expressed uncertainty about the frequency of ongoing vetting: "I don't know what you do to maintain those relationships, you know? I would imagine over time maybe suppliers, their circumstances might change, so your relationship would have to be an ongoing one… if I think about it, I don't know how often you check with them."

6.2.1.1.2. Trust of conveners and suppliers

With 'proximate' AFNs, members place their trust in the intermediary, their convener; their trust in the convener then transfers to suppliers (Renting et al., 2003). Members trust their convener, trust their convener's values and judgment, trust the convener's relationship with suppliers, and trust the information the convener conveys about the suppliers. It's the trust members place in the convener that becomes the proxy for trust in the suppliers.

Every member affirmed their trust in the ethics of GFC suppliers because of their trust in their convener. Rachel explicitly stated that she trusts GFC suppliers because she trusts me, her convener. "I feel like I trust you … your levels of judgment … and your investigation … so if you trust them, then I trust them." Jessy trusts GFC suppliers without fully knowing their ideologies. "Maybe I'm naïve," she said, "[but] I suppose I place a lot of trust in you … that you're finding the best options." For Sal, "Knowing that you know them, and you trust them, and you work with them [LAUGHS] … is huge."

There was more uncertainty and nuance in some members' answers about individual values that countered their strongly stated trust in suppliers' ethics. In each case, members weren't expressing distrust of suppliers, but rather that they didn't have enough information to warrant full trust. For example, Kim expressed trust in the convener's vetting of the suppliers. However, when asked if she trusts the ethics of GFC suppliers, Kim said it isn't enough to rely on the convener's judgment and information; she would need to see the producers' place of production for herself to trust their ethics fully:

> … a lot of it is basically just on quite an uninformed trust, I suppose… I do trust that they are doing what they say they do… in the way that they produce this food. But I might not

> be as informed as I could be… I think you really need to go to a place to know for sure, which I haven't done.

Members stated trust for their suppliers, but upon closer questioning they admitted that their proximate relationship with suppliers doesn’t give them all the information they would need to create full trust.

However, it can be said that members trust the suppliers’ ethics, at least to some standard of acceptability, and this trust can grow stronger. Despite the tensions described above, the proximate relationship with the suppliers somewhat compensates for lack of information about the supply-chain (Schermer, 2015). Because it’s not time or resource efficient to visit every supplier often, according to Louise, “We have to trust that what they say is true to a degree.” Stuart explained:

> I think as much as we'd all like to know the background to everything that we're buying… we've gotta trust other people's judgment on some of it… but then at the same time you're kind of balancing that with not wanting to outsource it to a supermarket… so it's helpful to be able to trust somebody that you know, and you can have a conversation with about it.

How does trust manifest for members? Members not only trust suppliers to produce and distribute ethically, but they also trust suppliers to treat them with fairness as consumers. This fairness is manifested when suppliers refund or take back ‘off’ items based on trust.

Trust sometimes stands in place of quality variations in the goods members receive. Rachel gave an example of variations in the cheese she buys from one farm. The most recent head of cheese she brought home from a market day looked older, had more mould on it. She trusts that it will be fine once she opens it, and she’s willing to accept that it won’t always have the same appearance, texture, and taste. She understands this differs from buying from a supermarket. To her, this makes the food “feel more real.”

Having access to knowledge about suppliers, even their names, gives members a sense of relationship and connection that is different from their other modes of purchasing food, especially from supermarkets. Catherine explained, “Yah, just realising that you could actually know the person who made your food… that I wasn't exposed to anywhere—any other platform.” She called the GFC model ‘relationship-based purchasing’. Sal agreed, “The fact that I actually know their names, and … I know something about their work ethic, is very different from any other way that we consume." Her participation has made her understand the value of developing relationships with suppliers, which she contrasted with purchasing food from supermarkets, where she thinks this isn't possible. Louise agreed:

> I think the fact that … you as the owner are in relationship with people that are supplying us is fundamental to how [the GFC is] working. I think it's really important. That's the difference between Pick n Pay [supermarket] and what we're doing. Pick n Pay is anonymous.

6.2.1.1.3. 'Face-to-face' contact

When members were asked if they wanted more direct connections with suppliers, Stuart was an outlier; he didn't need contact with suppliers because of the practicalities. "I can't really see us interacting directly with them… but knowing… who they are, and what their practices are… is sufficient." The rest expressed interest, but the intensity and frequency of the desired face-to-face contact varied.

Some members expressed the desire to visit farms as sharing events (Papaoikonomou & Ginieis, 2017). Catherine's family had been discussing this: "You are what you eat. So, it's all about tracking food from source." When asked if she thinks she has agency to visit the farms, her response was to be cautious. She wants to be respectful of busy farmers, but she would like to visit, even annually, with other GFC members. "I always feel more trust the more contact I have with people. That kind of bolsters trust."

Some expressed interest to meet suppliers at organised sharing events in Cape Town. Kim likes the idea, because she would like opportunity "every now and again" to ask suppliers questions in person. Jessy agreed:

> It would be lovely to meet them like once in a blue moon. I'm sure they'd find it hard to leave farms and things … I know it would take a lot of organising, so... [LAUGHS] it's not an essential.

Members' interest in interacting with suppliers was often qualified by their own time constraints, or concern to not burden busy suppliers with visitors. Rachel said, "I have the interest, but I don't have the time to fit something like that in." When researching RCCs in Spain, it was found that many members didn't visit farms [or other sharing events] when given the opportunity. The researchers decided this was because of members' time constraints in part, but also because of members' limited desire to connect with farmers (Papaoikonomou

& Ginieis, 2017). When GFC members expressed their interest in connecting with suppliers, some did name time constraints as an obstacle. Time constraints seemed to take priority over their desire for direct interactions.

In contrast to the way Italian *GAS* members share work and responsibility for their supplier relationships, GFC members seem content to let this relational work fall to their conveners (Forno et al., 2015; Grasseni, 2014; Migliore et al., 2014). Speaking about her convener, Kim said, “I have been a member for a long time… Hannah has an expectation of me, and I have an expectation of her then.” With members’ heavy reliance on their conveners, what reciprocal expectations can the convener have of members? The primary responsibility indicated by a few members was the responsibility to read information and news communicated by their conveners. Most members spoke of things they learned from their conveners. In addition, members felt a responsibility to send feedback to suppliers for any problems or concerns.

Only Catherine and Stuart seemed to think beyond a passive role in vetting suppliers. Speaking about sourcing items locally, Stuart acknowledged the difficulties of this, and said, “It's for us [members] … to do the reading up on it as well, in terms of, is it possible to get that locally? … in an alternative way? …I don't know that it always is. So, it's a bit of homework on-on my side as well.” With investigating animal treatment, Catherine wants to learn for herself, not leave the work to her convener. She said, “I actually need to be less passive.”

6.2.1.1.4. Connection among members

The primary relational space for GFC members to connect with each other is at monthly market days. Members had varying opinions about the importance of their social connections with each other as facilitated by the GFC. For some, they value their pre-existing (GFC) friendships with other members via their GFC involvement. Some value opportunities to connect with others at market days, because of a general sense of community that has built over years. In this way, market days offer time and space as a ‘common’ for social connection (Grasseni, 2013). Sal used to grab her goods and leave quickly, whereas now she engages with other members she sees at market days. “I love the market days… I never know who I'm going to meet… and you always have time for a little chat, which is nice, and catch up with folk.”

She expressed regret that a job change has meant she can no longer volunteer on market days.

For Stuart, provisioning food at a supermarket is about food as a commodity, whereas at GFC market days is about community. Market day is “not about just picking up the food, it’s also having the conversations, and finding out about the suppliers, and there’s all those benefits.” Members experience connection by sharing product information and recommendations with each other, and by members volunteering their time for the good of the group.

In contrast, some said their GFC involvement doesn’t facilitate strong relationships with other members. Catherine was clear that it needs the members as a collective for the GFC to “work”, and it’s important that they share values. But she said, “It’s not a very sociable thing, or with much contact.” One member described the market day social interactions as “a means to an end, not an objective.” For another, such connection isn’t necessary, “but it increases the value of the club.”

6.2.1.2 Reflections from suppliers

GFC suppliers’ relationships are with group conveners, as necessitated by the GFC’s organisational structure. Suppliers varied in how they perceived their direct supply relationship with the GFC as distinct from their other customers. Ruth seeks a good relational connection with every customer, and therefore her GFC relationship isn’t qualitatively different from with her other customers. Rita experiences her GFC relationship as less direct than at markets, her preferred interface for selling, because she likes to educate people about products. Her proximate relationship with members through the convener as intermediary isn’t ideal. She prefers to sell at markets, because “it's the quickest way to get honest feedback.” She’s concerned that members could stop buying her products and she wouldn’t know why.

6.2.1.2.1. Connection to members

Suppliers affirmed the connection they experience with the GFC, whether because of their direct relationship with the convener, or because they know something about the membership base. Sharmaine’s farm employees pack individualised produce-boxes weekly for the same GFC members; although it would be nice to “put faces with names”, they have developed their own “mental pictures of each member”, especially those they’ve labelled as “difficult.” One hears about consumers wishing to put faces and names to the producers of their food; it’s intriguing when this flips around, such that it is producers expressing desire to put faces to the consumers of their food.

Two suppliers contrasted the quality of their direct GFC relationship with impersonal interactions when supplying supermarkets. Alison describes her relationship with the GFC as:

> …a better connection, because then you know who your product is going to. Instead of going to the Spar [supermarket], sitting on the shelf… it's a nameless, faceless person who buys the product… I don't know your customer-base, but know it's going to you… So yes. It is nicer.

For Jim:

> It is different in that we're dealing with a, um, if you want to call it a face at the end of the line, whereas when I deal with say Organic Zone [niche retailer], you know it's just a clerk who phones or sends in an order.

6.2.1.2.2. Trust for the GFC conveners and members

Every supplier affirmed that trust levels are good on both sides of the supplier-GFC relationship. However, Murray alone qualified this, sharing his wish to be able to trust every convener more deeply. While chatting before the interview, Murray questioned different conveners’ motivations for running their GFC:

> I want to trust that every single Good Food Club [convener will be]… just as passionate as the other… to see… accessible, more cost-effective products … real sustainability, and real conscious consumption … I wanna be able to trust that.

He seemed to imply that some conveners are motivated only to make a profit, whereas others are committed to the values he listed.

For suppliers generally, the repeated interactions allow trust to build, manifesting in the following ways:

- Suppliers trust when items need refunds or returns, or when claims of non-delivery are made, as contrasted with retailers they supply. According to Alison, in contrast to retailers she suppliers, “When you guys phone… to say I didn't get this delivered, we trust that you didn't get that delivered … we don't question." Similarly, for Jim, he trusts when the GFC raises these problems because complaints are rare:

> In terms of the Good Food Club, we've never had… any problems... I think it's easier… to sort of extend that trust because of who you're dealing with, than say with a retailer who's just got a clerk checking the stuff in.

- Suppliers trust the GFC to pay promptly after delivery. Not one supplier has had problems with GFC payment. In Alison's experience, because a history has been built, "there's no reason to question" if the GFC will pay promptly. Ruth also pointed out the long relationship generating trust for payment - and she expressed thanks when the GFC finds invoicing errors she makes.

Trust can stand in place of quality variations in the goods members they supply. This has important implications for the dairy products from Jim's farm. If he were supplying a large dairy farm, his milk buckets would be tested every day, and only those meeting a set standard of fat content would be acceptable. But cows eat different things, depending on which season and which pastures they are grazing; on sweltering days, the cows stand in the dam drinking water all day. Variations in their diets and in their water intake cause the consistency of their milk to vary. GFC members accept variations in their final products.

Suppliers' proximate relationships with members are held through the conveners as intermediaries, through whom most information travels. This supply-chain relationship one-link removed from the end consumers is a distance that most suppliers experience as negative.

GFC suppliers understand that trust builds when members have better information and understanding of the suppliers' businesses, values, and products. They want more feedback from members about their products; and for more information about their message and products to get to members. For this reason, suppliers expressed more desire for face-to-face contact with members than members did with suppliers.

They believe more face-to-face opportunities to interact with members would increase and improve the flow of two-way communication.

Some suppliers feel face-to-face contact is important to educate members about their products. Murray believes clear communication between suppliers and GFCs to be essential. He would like to make his company's "full records of traceability, cold-chain, every delivery, certificates of compliance" for their meat accessible to GFC members. "We're all about transparency, uh, that builds trust." He'd like the GFC to organise gatherings so he can address and interact with members, because he believes educating members about meat products is important. Ruth likes the idea of these gatherings with members but believes an added benefit would be the opportunity to meet and network with the other GFC suppliers.

Jim also wants face-to-face contact with members, but it's difficult because his farm is a four-hour drive from Cape Town. He thinks his relationship with members is probably only slightly better than with a shop. "We're farmers… obviously we don't deal… with the end user that much." Jim occasionally gets feedback from members via the conveners. He thinks he should be "popping in at market days more", but he also acknowledged that market days are too busy to be good for connecting. He'd like to come to Cape Town for a separate, pre-arranged opportunity to interact with members, and give information about his products, a "Meet the Farmer, type of thing" sharing event (Papaoikonomou & Ginieis, 2017).

Face-to-face contact for Rita, ideally, would happen at her market stall. There, all her products are displayed, so members could taste and give immediate feedback. If not that, she would like to collaborate with conveners by equipping them with more informational material to educate members:

> I'm not selling something like furniture you buy once-off. I'm selling something that I want someone to come back to buy again. And that is where I think education is very important. People need to know what they are buying. And if they have the confidence in that, then they will buy again.

Stefan sees the unused opportunities to communicate his company's 'message' to members. He wanted to know what his company needed to do to "help support" a deepening understanding of their company for GFC members.

6.2.2 Economic benefit for both members and suppliers

In the GFC's early days, we primarily wanted economic benefit for our own families. Over time, engaging with producers and learning more about their position in the MFC, we wanted to ensure that suppliers also economically benefit from our supply interactions. When I asked Hannah to reflect on this:

> … number one, that the farmer or the supplier… is being paid what is reasonable. I think one of my frustrations has always been the little that I understand of what happens in retail sectors, when it comes to what farmers get paid… it's always sounded like a bargaining conversation that happens, and then down to the smallest penny is often where the farmer or the supplier is left, to the advantage of the retailer.

She believes farmers need the respect of being able to say, "This is my price." She believes the GFC is "facilitating a more respectful relationship between the supplier and the consumer." In these 'relationships of regard' (Demartini et al., 2017; Hughes, 2005; Sage, 2007), members trust suppliers to sell their goods at the prices they need, without having to negotiate from a position of weakness. She doesn't believe producers receive this regard from supermarkets, that instead, supermarkets push their advantage as 'price setters' (Greenberg, 2015).

As with GAS members that Fonte (2013) researched, who were satisfied to pay prices that were just and fair for both the producer and consumer, Hannah thinks members appreciate paying a "reasonable price" for the goods we buy together. How is a 'reasonable price' determined?

> How do I measure [LAUGHS] whether someone's charging a reasonable price?... I only have the retail sector to compare it with. And that's not a good place to compare it with… it's a level of trust between myself and the supplier.

6.2.2.1 Reflections from members

For four members, this value of mutual economic benefit was a motivation for joining the GFC, with Sal saying it was the "biggest" reason she joined. For the other three, with Louise the quality of the actual product was more important to her than benefitting the supplier; Jessy said it wasn't a factor because she hadn't been aware that she had any agency as a consumer to do anything about this; and Rachel said it wasn't something she had ever thought about.

Every member now considers it an important value, although some expressed it as a deeper conviction than others. According to Catherine, "I think it very much permeates the ethos of everything … it's about equity, yah, and access, both of the supplier and of the … consumers." However, she admitted that is an un-interrogated assumption.

They believe suppliers and members can share the wider profit margins created by shortened GFC supply-chain transactions. Every member believes GFC suppliers are benefitting economically. Between them, they gave three reasons to support this assumption:

1. Cutting out supply-chain intermediaries gives suppliers more profit;
2. Suppliers have the agency to set their own prices, and would ask for more if they needed;
3. They trust the convener to be fair and ethical in working out prices with suppliers.

Louise contrasted this with the supermarkets. She believes the "profit margins they insist on having" to be one hundred percent.

Every member spoke about their own benefit as consumers. They think the prices they pay are "fair", "better", "similar", or "comparatively cheaper" for the quality of the food they access through the GFC, as compared with the supermarkets, or with smaller niche retailers. For example, they can buy intensively-farmed eggs for the cheapest prices at the supermarkets; but truly free-range eggs are cheaper via the GFC than at the supermarket. Comparing eggs with eggs, members judge the GFC quality and standard to be better, and for better prices. They noted some food groupings are cheaper via the GFC (e.g., butter), and some are more expensive (e.g., meat). There were differing opinions about this. Some admitted to no longer knowing supermarket prices for certain items, because they now only buy them via the GFC.

Even for prices considered more expensive via the GFC, members seemed willing to pay them because the prices are fair to all involved in the transactions. Kim noted, "I think you have to pay more for good food." For Louise, "Cheaper has no ethics."

Information shared by conveners—including sharing about their own values—was the significant contributor to the deepening of this value for members. Louise said to me (her convener):

> You have communicated well with us about… your own values system… and I'm influenced by that… sometimes you've brought up things I've never thought about

> before… I just haven't gone there in my mind, and then I'm: 'Ah, okay', and it's an *aha* moment… and then, you know, I see it slightly different, then I'm- I'm definitely more concerned about the producer and … and how they are being paid than I was at the start.

For Kim, spending time on a friend's rural farm and learning first-hand about the mechanics of transporting goods from small rural farms to urban consumers has helped her understand supply costs. As a consumer, she says, she now expects to pay for that.

6.2.2.2 Reflections from suppliers

In the previous chapter, I shared suppliers' opinions about the ways they benefit from supplying the GFC. To summarise, they view the economic benefits as being the consistent business they receive from the GFC, and that the GFC as an entity is an uncomplicated customer that pays quickly.

Suppliers had much to say about the ways GFC members are benefitting. The scale of collective orders gives the GFC access to better price-tiers, usually wholesale prices. Murray pointed out that the GFC pays the same prices as big hotels. Alison's company gives the GFC a 5% discount on wholesale prices, so she believes the GFC benefits the most in the relationship. Rita's company prices their goods the most cheaply to customers at markets close to their farm; they give the GFC the next lowest pricing tier, with the urban-to-rural transport costs factored into prices.

Suppliers also pointed out the economic benefits of this direct supply-chain for members. Rita has a passion for providing a quality product at more affordable prices, something that is only possible with such a shortened supply-chain. "Because you are buying directly from the farm … there's not another person making a large amount of profit." Other suppliers named this benefit as well. Sharmaine attributes this to her direct relationship with members once-removed:

> I haven't met your members. But when I think of them blindly, I think of them as pretty well educated, and they know what they want… the freshest, and the healthiest possible food… they're very aware that they are getting good quality, um, at a good price, because they're getting it directly from the farmer.

6.2.3 Ethical treatment of employees

When discussing the ethical treatment of employees as a value, it's helpful to consider that each company is a small business operating in a food regime that favours large businesses. It's a hard world for small businesses trying to survive and thrive—and to employ people with just practices. It's also helpful to consider the labour history and context of the country. In the Apartheid years, South African business could treat people as labour to exploit. In 1995, South Africa instituted labour legislation that is regarded as fair for employees.

Assessing suppliers' treatment of their employees includes considerations of fair remuneration, good working conditions, formal contracts, and employee benefits. Regarding South African farm employees specifically, there are additional considerations regarding terms and conditions for housing on the farms. It's complicated to determine what constitutes good labour practice. South African labour law stipulates minimum standards, but minimum compliance does not necessarily fulfil qualitative standards consumers might want for the people involved in growing their food.

Hannah wants to be sure that suppliers are treating their employees ethically, especially by paying them well. She hopes that if a supplier has the power to set prices for their goods, then the fair payment of their employees would be included in those prices.

However, this is hard information to access. Hannah voiced her frustration, "It's such an important value, but I've still not figured out how to have those conversations." She said business owners become defensive and give justifications for their labour practices. She finds it easier to ask questions about how farmers treat animals than how producers and suppliers treat their employees.

Hannah's contact with delivery people gives her some insight into a company's treatment of at least some of their employees. With regular monthly contact, she can ask questions, gleaning bits of information about their relationships with their employers. In fact, Hannah says it's been more effective to gather information from the delivery people than to ask the owners directly.

The long-term relationships build capacity to observe and monitor supplier labour practices. However, Hannah acknowledged that conveners need proactive strategies for learning more, because it's too important an issue to not have accurate information. Hannah insists that GFC conveners or members must visit each supplier regularly. And she admitted that conveners will need to toughen up and ask direct questions about employment policies.

6.2.3.1 Reflections from members

Two members held this as a key value when they started with the GFC; for the rest, it either wasn't why they joined, or they hadn't thought about it before the interview. This was a fascinating value to explore, because of the lack of transparency as described by Hannah above.

Three members were unsure if suppliers adhere to fair labour practices with their employees. However, two of these believe they could assume fair employee practices to be one element that makes up an overall ethical approach, even if not specified. Kim observed it would be unusual for business owners in any sector to talk openly about their labour practices, but she "would be distressed to hear" of a supplier mistreating their staff.

All four who believe suppliers are treating their employees well are confident they have enough information about suppliers to assess this. The basis for this is their trust in their conveners, whom they assume are monitoring suppliers for this—not specific knowledge about suppliers. For Sal, although this information isn't stated in the GFC informational documents about suppliers, she's "pretty sure that that is something that [the convener has] ascertained before we select them as suppliers." For Louise, "open" communication of information has helped her trust in her convener's judgment regarding this value.

Some members displayed conflicted feelings about this value, for the lack of attention or priority they have given it, or uncertainty about how to assess it. Kim confessed feeling ashamed that she had never thought about fair labour practices as a GFC value. After rating the ethical treatment of animals as her highest value in her interview, Jessy messaged after to say: "It has been sitting uncomfortably with me all day that I choose animal welfare over labourers' welfare... Do you need me to pick one? Or can I choose both as crucial?" Before the interview, Catherine hadn't "thought that far down the chain." She described it as a 'blind spot' but affirmed its importance as a value. But she asked, "At what point do we say this is our realm of intervention?" She asked if suppliers were doing other things right, but didn't have everything right regarding their employees, would that mean we would have to drop them as suppliers? “I feel quite intimidated by that.”

One member, Jessy, believes there’s a lack of access to food produced by labourers fairly treated in the supply-chain, “rather than the lack of interest in the labourers.” She implied that the GFC has given her “a vehicle” to buy more consciously regarding this value.

Every member said this value is now important to them, although not the most important for some. For Rachel, this value “was another piece that came in,” the conviction developing as there’s been more supply-chain transparency. This value factored strongly for Sal joining the GFC and continues to be an important value driving her involvement. She wants to see that all people in the supply-chains receive fair reward for their work. Two members raised the question of farm workers’ rights with generational farm housing, admitting they’d like to know more about this from our suppliers.

Information shared by conveners was the significant contributor to shifts or the deepening of this value for members. Two people highlighted that hearing accounts of the conveners’ own thoughts and interactions with suppliers were helpful for highlighting the value.

6.2.3.2 Reflections from suppliers

In the previous chapter, I described each supplier company according to size of staff, and breakdown of full-time/part-time, and formal staff with contracts and casual/ seasonal staff. Here follows additional information shared by suppliers about their employment practices.

All but one company employ most of their staff full-time, with part-time staff making up the difference. Except for one business, every supplier has permanent employees (full-time and part-time) on contracts. The exception in both cases is Ruth’s business, where the two full-time staff are out-numbered by a part-time casual worker and two commission-based marketing and sales contracted workers. (They are the smallest company of the data set when measuring by staff size.) Murray won’t hire people into part-time positions: “I don’t believe in part-time labour, because I feel it’s too unstable.” Most suppliers complement their staff with casual weekend or seasonal employees when they need extra capacity.

Four suppliers talked about their hopes to create employment. Stefan’s company was started by a Danish man who wanted to create jobs in Africa. Rita’s company gives as much work as possible to a community member, who prepares and packs orders. It's their desire to give him a formal contract for a full-time job as soon as they are financially able.

In contrast, Rita was the only interviewee who spoke about keeping their staff small, and the possibility of mechanising, for reasons of quality control.

Every supplier pays above minimum wage, with variations in how much they pay above that rate.[35] On the lowest end, Sharmaine's farm pays slightly about minimum wage (but they also offer housing to every formal employee). There isn't data to compare suppliers representing the higher end of payment scales, but Murray, as an example, said:

> I pay my staff well above minimum wage … I was an employee for many years, and I know what it's like to get taken advantage of when you really give your heart and soul into what you're doing.

Suppliers named a range of additional aspects of employee treatment, such as staff training, medical care, and farm housing. Only Alison referred to the Basic Conditions of Employment (BCE)[36] as the standard to which her company adheres regarding labour practice—although every person paid for work by any of these companies falls under the protections of the BCE.

Three suppliers spoke about ensuring their staff are well-trained for their specific jobs. They consider this important for the employees, whether for reasons of employee safety, dignity or facilitating meaningful work contribution.

One supplier, Stefan, volunteered that they give permanent employees medical aid as part of their remuneration packages. Jim's farm employees have their medical care for "basic ailments" paid for by the farm business, so they aren't off the job for longer than necessary. The farm assists dependents of the employees by transporting them to medical facilities, but the farm doesn't pay their medical expenses. Rita spoke about a mobile medical clinic that comes to their area every week to provide primary health care for the children.

Each of the three farm suppliers provides free staff housing tied to the employment of one inhabitant. For housing on her farm, Rita specified: "Everybody can have a house… every

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[35] In 2019, when the interviews were held, minimum wage for agricultural workers was R18/hour, for domestic workers was R15/hour, and for all other sectors was R20/hour as per the National Minimum Wage Act (2018).

[36] The Basic Conditions of Employment Act [No. 75 of 1997] lays out the most basic employee work rights for all places of work. (https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/a75-97.pdf)

permanent staff member, and their immediate family… can stay." She said "everybody" wants to work for them because they give them a house, water, and space to plant their own vegetables. For Sharmaine, it's important to provide "proper" housing, which she described as having "proper ceilings", sanitation, electricity, indoor toilets, and plumbing.

Rita spoke about alcohol in relation to her employees. "Alcoholism is a very big problem here." To ensure safety in using heavy farm equipment, their employees take daily breathalyser tests—sometimes even twice daily. And as part of the certification process for GLOBALG.A.P.,[37] employees have their blood tested for chemicals or (recreational) drugs. Therefore, their employees consent to being tested "for their own safety and health."

6.2.4 Supporting local and small businesses

As explained in the methodology chapter, in the Interview Guide I combined questions about local and small as values. This sometimes made it difficult to parse responses about the two values, therefore I combined them below for findings and analysis. In this section, I share attitudes and understanding of local and small as constructs, and then discuss and analyse these findings. Born & Purcell (2006) caution assigning inherent value to any scale, with special caution for assuming the 'local' scale is inherently good. Therefore, I examine how members attach value to these scales.

Given the combination of the tough economic environment and high unemployment rates, Hannah thinks the best way South African food consumers can contribute to the national economy is to support businesses that are both local and small.

Consistent with Northern AFNs, Hannah also positions her motivation to support local businesses as the desire to have a "smaller footprint", to shorten the distance goods need to travel for reasons of energy conservation and impact on the environment (Papaoikonomou & Ginieis, 2017; Seyfang, 2006).

When the GFC started, she defined 'local' as businesses in the Western Cape province. Her understanding of what is 'local' has changed over the past years because of two factors:

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[37] **GLOBALG.A.P.** is a trademark and a set of standards for good agricultural practices (G.A.P.). (https://www.globalgap.org/uk_en/who-we-are/about-us/)

1. She now understands that "our diets don't always align with" what is locally available, that sometimes one sources what she calls "preferred products" from further afield. "Do you exclude a particular product because it can't be farmed in South Africa? … that's the tension."
2. Learning about South African farming has helped her understand that rural farmers often struggle to find distribution networks to access urban consumers. "Having connections and relationships with urban sectors, like a big city like Cape Town for example, is of great benefit to that farmer." She wants to help facilitate sustained relationships and distribution networks from rural to urban with South African farms.

In the last few years, her definition of 'local' expanded beyond the Western Cape to the borders of South Africa. If the 'preferred product' isn't produced in the country, she is willing to source it from outside South Africa.

Hannah defines a small business as "any business that doesn't have a complex hierarchy of leaders… not top-heavy."

6.2.4.1 Reflections from members

Each member said supporting local businesses is a value that motivates their involvement in the GFC. Those who think it's important to support local businesses gave the same two reasons that Hannah gave: their belief that the shorter the distance food needs to travel between production and consumption, the better it is for the environment; and their desire to support the South African economy, especially for reasons of job creation. For Jessy, "It feels important to be supporting 'South African local'" in order to support an economy in a country with high unemployment rates.

Members collectively define 'local' as Cape Town and surroundings; but most expressed 'flexible localism' determinants (Granvik et al., 2017; Morris & Buller, 2003) by widening the scope when 'preferred products' aren't produced in Cape Town. There was some opinion that sourcing further away from Cape Town should happen only when the goods aren't produced anywhere closer. There was acknowledgment that sometimes there is a “supply issue” of goods not being produced within the Western Cape, and therefore there is the need “to open that definition a bit” to source from further away. “Obviously, local can be a little relative.” As Louise phrased it when speaking about items not produced locally, “We’re gonna buy from somewhere.” But when “there isn’t a local alternative… I think the closer that we can get to Cape Town, the better.”

However, sometimes there’s a matter of preference. Kim isn’t “prepared to give up” specific dairy products that come from a farm a four-hour drive from Cape Town. Her desire for the products outweighs her motivation to find similar products produced closer to Cape Town, so in this case the farm is “local enough” for her.

It wasn’t clear from the responses whether members were speaking about the goods as produced locally or as businesses based in Cape Town supplying goods produced further away. Only Rachel described ‘local’ as being a local farmer or an intermediary supplying goods produced further away.

When members were asked how they would define a ‘small’ business, they raised three key factors to consider:

1. The role of business owner or top management. In small businesses, they are involved in all aspects of the business in a hands-on way.
2. The number of employees. One member put the number of employees as thirty or less; others spoke relationally, that the owner or top management knows every employee. Sal explained:

   > There would probably technically be something to do with turnover, that it would be less than a million a month, or something like that. I know there’s a sort of legal SMME thing… but I think for me, again, it’s the relationships… that the bosses know everyone, then that’s still small.

3. The economic vulnerability of the business. Jessy thinks small businesses are “easily bullied by supermarkets, so they’d struggle to hold their own. Or struggle to find a big

> enough market to stay sustainable." According to Louise: "The finances of a business are vulnerable, and therefore my purchase power makes a difference."

Stuart positioned 'small' differently, by how the GFC relates within the business—if dealing with agents, then it's not a small business; but if dealing with people directly involved in the business operations, then it's small. He admitted it's a "philosophical" lens, that he doesn't define 'small' by revenue or by the number of staff. He gave the example of a farm that might need many employees, and yet is still considered small.

Most members affirmed their belief that the GFC is supporting local and small businesses. Only two members indicated they weren't motivating factors for joining the GFC. For Catherine, her concern "emerged" as she "became conscious" of their importance. Stuart and his wife now question buying products from overseas if there is any possibility of buying from a South African source, whereas before this "wouldn't really even have factored."

These values are important to every member now, and for some they have become more important. Jessy summarised: "I think it's deepened. I think I really, really appreciate now how important being… a farmer who's in touch with what they're doing and using less energy to get food from where it's made" to the consumer. Over Sal's time in the GFC, she's seen that "having relationships with our suppliers was important, and… you can't have that with a big conglomerate. [LAUGHS] Small became important to me."

Information shared by conveners was one contributor to shifts or deepening of these values. For Catherine, who made the largest shift, it was learning about actual farmers that caused "the lights to go on" for supporting both small and local businesses. "We were looking to support the small people who're trying to get their business off the ground. And actually, in a way, be a buffer against being exploited by Woolworths [supermarket] and the rest."

Another contributor, as Rachel shared, was the "wider conversation and information in the media about… our footprint" and the South African economy. Jessy follows a blog about a homesteader in America that has helped inform her.

6.2.4.2 Reflections from suppliers

Suppliers spoke of their commitment to sourcing their inputs locally, including aspects related to packaging or transport. They'll buy from outside the city, the country, or the continent if they can't source the items from closer. Some even spoke of themselves as consumers, choosing to source their household provisions as locally as possible.

Exceptions given for not sourcing 'locally' were when another value superseded it in priority. Stefan's company won't source their cocoa beans from government-owned companies in countries with gross human rights abuses, therefore they choose to source from farther away than closer possible sources. In Alison's case, her company sources a variety of pantry items from both local and overseas sources. Her desire to sell GMO-free products trumps her desire to buy locally if the local supplier can't guarantee the products are GMO-free, but the non-local suppliers can. However, she also admitted that she sometimes chooses the non-local supply if the price is "spectacular."

Two farmers expressed concerns about the romantic commodification of the local scale when they are rurally located and their goods must travel many kilometres to access urban consumers (Born & Purcell, 2006; Papaoikonomou & Ginieis, 2017). Jim named 'local' as a current "buzzword" among consumers: "People wanna buy their food, you know, close by... Or it must be produced close by." Sharmaine noted that "people love supporting local", but her farm itself isn't "that local" to Cape Town, since it's "over the mountains." But then, Cape Town itself, she also notes "doesn't have loads of agriculture."

Stefan is concerned about the future with the GFC if his company grows larger. From the interview notes with him:

> At the end of the interview, he was quiet for a while, and then asked if would be a problem if they grew bigger as a company. I said that was a good question. I… said I didn't think so, as long as their ethic stays similar.

By the inherent goodness they assign to both scales, it's possible that members and suppliers fall into both the 'local trap' and 'small trap', (Born & Purcell, 2006). One example is the under-interrogated assumption that less 'food miles' means that 'local' is the best value. However, given South Africa's corporate dominance of the food system combined with its high rates of unemployment, the stated desire to support the national economy by supporting local and small businesses is understandable.

6.2.5 Ethical treatment of animals

Supporting the ethical production of animal products was an important value from the formative days of the GFC, according to Hannah, because it "matters to animals and to consumers." It's her wish to see livestock living "as naturally as possible." She believes that large-scale farming usually equates to worse treatment of animals than smaller farming concerns. But she admitted that she doesn't understand enough about how farmers can have sufficient animals on their farm to make a profit, while enabling the animals to live as 'naturally' as possible. She remembers a small farm that used to supply the GFC with chicken meat. As the farmer scaled up his quantities, the living conditions for the chickens became compromised. He was eventually dropped as a supplier. She acknowledged that she learns about livestock farming from the farmers we interact with, but more information is needed.

6.2.5.1 Reflections from members

The desire to buy ethically-produced animal products was a value that motivated five members to join the GFC. While they rated this value highly, some members expressed resigned understanding that animal products brought via the GFC might come from animals treated better than from intensive farming supply-chains, but the animals are unlikely to be living idyllic farm lives. Two members, Sal and Catherine, communicated this resignation clearly.

Interestingly, in both households there have been changes in their meat consumption through their GFC involvement: one family eating less meat, and one eating more.

- Since they joined the GFC, some of Sal's family have become vegetarian for "animal treatment and environmental reasons." It's important that any meat the non-vegetarian members eat is ethically produced.
- Catherine's family eats more meat now through the GFC because they believe it's "better sourced." Her family would eat less if it they were buying from the supermarkets. She

acknowledged she probably doesn't know enough about the living and dying conditions of GFC-supplied animals, turning a "blind eye" to the realities of how even GFC meat arrives on her plate. "I don't kid myself" that the conditions are wholly ethical; just "better."

Even while trusting that meat purchased through the GFC is "better" in its production ethics, most members wish for more information about suppliers. For Stuart and his wife, thinking about the supply-chain has them interrogating the surface claims or jargon versus the realities on the farms. They want to better understand suppliers' philosophies and practices.

For the two for whom it wasn't initially a motivating factor, it has since become an important value. All members said it has deepened as a value. Contributors to the deepening of this value have been information coming from general media sources generated by consumer interest in the topic—'the Zeitgeist' as Kim names it—and from conveners and other members. For Jessy, the reasons her convener has given when dropping certain suppliers because of farming practices has been especially helpful.

A contributor for Kim has been fellow GFC members who feel the same; this makes it easier to follow through with her convictions.

6.2.5.2 Reflections from suppliers

Three of the suppliers interviewed sell meat, eggs and/or dairy products to the GFC. Two are farmers, the producers of their supply to the GFC; the third owns a butchery and is therefore an intermediary supplier. As seen above, members wish for more information about the meat supply-chains. The differences in the consumer-supplier interactions for these three suppliers, and consequent transfer of information and trust placement, show the three different relational SFSC at work within the GFC as an AFN (Renting et al., 2003).

Murray, the wholesale butcher, made this observation: "You guys, for such a small group of people, do buy a large volume of meat." He doesn't farm the meat he supplies, and therefore he believes consumers need access to codified information in order to trust the ethics behind the production. Every farm he sources from is registered with SAMIC,[38] which he claims

[38] **SAMIC (South African Meat Industry Company)** is a quality assurance company which was created by the Red Meat Industry of South Africa to ensure the quality and safety of meat in South Africa. (https://samic.co.za/about/)

guarantees that all the meat he supplies is traceable to source. He admitted he “should” visit their source farms more often, but that isn’t always practical for him, and therefore he puts his “trust in the [SAMIC] system that’s auditing.” Because his business is “all about transparency that builds trust” he makes this information accessible to the GFC. This reliance on an external guarantor of standards positions this consumer-supplier relationship as an ‘extended’ SFSC (Renting et al., 2003). Murray claims there’s a lack of “suitable farms” from which to source ethically-produced meat.

Jim’s second-generation family farm has cows, chickens, and pigs. He didn’t name formal farming protocols, rather practices as he “thinks is right.” Their cows are pasture-fed and milked once daily so that the calves can milk the rest of the time—which he claims is not usual practice. He described the cruelty of the state regulated abattoir system. “The system falls down regarding killing animals.” It pained him to speak about transporting the animals to slaughter, a necessary evil within the regulatory system as it is. The difficulty with having a farm licence to slaughter animals for sale is the vet inspections required for each animal slaughtered. These vet costs would be too expensive to keep his business profitable. Jim is positioned as a ‘proximate’ SFSC for his GFC interactions because members rely on their convener to act as mediator (Renting et al., 2003).

The third supplier, Sharmaine, supplies the GFC with fresh farm produce and eggs. She spoke of the recent bird flu epidemic, how it caused a supply scarcity of chicks because large farms were prioritised. She opined that animals are “easier farming”, less risky than crops, because animals can quickly be sold in hard times. Numerous GFC members and conveners have visited the farm and toured the chicken barns. In this way, Sharmaine’s farm is relationally positioned as both a ‘face-to-face’ and a ‘proximate’ SFSC (Renting et al., 2003).

6.2.6 Ethical farming and soil production methods

The literature argues that increasingly, consumers have become disenchanted with production methods which cause harm to the soil, the environment, and human health (Forssell & Lankoski, 2014; Wiskerke, 2009). Consumers who want to access organic products, but are physically and relationally distant from farms, have institutionalised their trust by relying on certification to guarantee ethical farming methods (Hankins & Grasseni, 2014, p. 182).

Hannah reflected on her early understanding that the costs of certification are often prohibitive for farmers who use organic production methods. She believes it's important to learn from the farmers themselves how they farm, and not simply ask whether their goods are organic. "I quickly learned that you have to… ask in a few different ways to understand how someone farms." Sometimes unavoidable circumstances affect a farm's ability to claim being organic. She gave the example of one supplier who farms using organic methods, but other farms in the area spray their crops with harmful pesticides. For this reason, this supplier could never become certified.

She'd choose to buy organic products over non-organic, if she's given the option; but she won't exclude products not farmed using organic methods if there are other good reasons for buying the goods. For example, she'll prioritise supporting local or small farms over buying organic produce coming from much further away.

6.2.6.1 Reflections from members

The ethical treatment of the soil in production methods was a motivating factor for joining the GFC for three members. Most members define 'organic' as food produced by methods using minimal or no artificial fertilizers or pesticides; some included the preservation of the soil. Catherine had a wider definition: "Growing food in such a way that thought is given to the impact of farming on the soil, insects, and future use of the land. There is an effort to produce food in a way that causes minimal damage." She admitted she didn't know exactly what would comprise ethical production. Kim thinks 'organic' has a technical definition, but she admitted to not knowing much about it. From an ethical position, it's important to her that produce is grown "in as natural a way as possible", which for her means not grown intensively. This is the same principle she would apply to meat production.

Buying 'organic' is now important to most members, but with qualification. For Catherine, it's not the "sole deciding factor" when making purchase choices. For Sal, it's a "nice add-on", but it isn't as important to her as the other values of the GFC. She believes ethical production is a spectrum, with full organic production at one end of the spectrum. In her words, "[One] can actually be an ethical producer who looks after the environment without being totally organic. So, that's why it isn't quite such a big deal as the other values we have." She believes most GFC suppliers are trying to be ethical producers, that they are somewhere on this spectrum.

Only one member said organic production isn't important. For him, organic production is a "tricky subject", because non-organic "influences are actually quite helpful" in terms of "efficient agriculture practice." For this reason, he doesn't think "pure organic is necessarily the way to go." If he must choose, suppliers' labour practices are more important than whether the food is produced organically.

Members who place importance on 'organic' do so primarily as a response to environmental concerns, and not as much to health concerns. For Kim, her concern for how the environment and soil are being treated in food production has deepened. It's now "an issue" for her, but it wasn't when she joined the GFC. Environmental concerns have recently become a source of anxiety for Louise. She's now very concerned about "what's going into the soil, and what's not going into the soil." Only Jessy said health concerns motivate her to buy organic food, but for her it's because she believes organic food is inherently more nutritious than non-organic.

Because of their proximate relation to suppliers, none of the members expressed the need for organic certification (Renting et al., 2003). Kim has educated herself about what it means to farm organically in a South African context, so it's enough for her to know suppliers are following organic principles. "I don't need a stamp telling me it's organic." Jessy's reasoning is the high certification costs for suppliers. It's sufficient for her if she's able to trust that the suppliers are using good methods.

Some members felt they don't have enough information about the legitimacy of suppliers' organic methods. While Louise believes GFC suppliers adhere to organic principles, she has a "question mark" for intermediary suppliers, especially when products are coming from other countries. She thinks there's too little accessible information available about such products.

Two members brought up cost as a factor when buying organically produced food. For Jessy, there are organic items (e.g., nuts) that she would like to buy but are too expensive for her.

Through the GFC, she believes she has access to more organic produce than she did previously.

All but one member either began prioritising or holding this value more deeply. For Rachel, ‘organic’ has been important to her from the start, but “it’s deepened with knowing more.”

The key to shifts in this value was information transferred from conveners. For Catherine, it only became important to her when she started buying fresh produce through the GFC.

6.2.6.2 Reflections from suppliers

Six suppliers spoke about quality assurance measures they implement to assure environmentally-friendly production.

The two wholesalers rely on extended SFSC certification bodies to provide assurances of standards (Renting et al., 2003):

- Alison’s company primarily distributes pantry items, some of which are sourced from other countries. She claims everything they distribute is GMO-free (with certification in some cases), and they also distribute some certified organic products. Her key value is to sell food that is GMO-free, because she believes that’s better for the environment. It’s farming “like how it should be.” They have investigated which certification bodies are trustworthy and know which are “jokes”. It’s not possible to visit every place they source from, but she “absolutely” trusts the certifications.
- Murray values traceability. His company only sources meat with farms that are SAMIC-registered. He trusts this registration to assure him and his customers of a standard of production quality and the traceability of every carcass.

The suppliers who produce their own goods highlighted concerns about the expense of certification, and expand on their own values for deciding whether to certify their products:

- Stefan’s chocolate company sources various ingredients, making decisions according to a mixture of values and business prudence. They import organic cocoa beans —sometimes certified, sometimes not. They test the beans for pesticide residue, although the farms "have never seen pesticides in that area." The cocoa butter they buy is *UTZ*-certified,[39] which he says means the source farms look after their employees and the environment. They buy sugar from a South African company that only sources from small-scale farms, prioritising supporting 'local' and 'small' over organic. Stefan's company was fully 'organic' until six years ago, but that made their products too expensive for customers at the scale they were then selling. They dropped being fully organic in order to sell more of their products. They've now increased their sales enough that they hope their products can become certified organic and also keep their prices flat. But they might have to increase costs, and consequently might lose customers. "People will always tell you they want [organically produced goods], but they aren't always willing to pay for it." He described it as a constant battle to find a balance.

- Because Rita's family farm exports some of their fruit overseas, they have *GLOBALG.A.P.* certification for which they pay an expensive annual certification fee. This certification requires them to conduct impact studies, only use biodegradable products on their crops, and test their fruit for traces of harmful chemicals.
- The cows on Jim's farm graze on Kikuyu pastures that they over-seed with rye grass Lucerne. He insists they try to farm their soil with care. For twenty years they've been using a 'no till' method for their pastures, using special machines to drop the seed. They try to use little or no pesticides, herbicides, or chemical fertilizers. They won't apply for organic certification because the cost is prohibitively high. They'd have to "virtually double the price" of their goods to be certified organic.

[39] "UTZ certification shows consumers that products have been sourced, from farm to shop shelf, in a sustainable manner. To become certified, all UTZ suppliers have to follow our Code of Conduct, which offers expert guidance on better farming methods, working conditions and care for nature. This in turn leads to better production, a better environment and a better life for everyone." (https://utz.org/what-we-offer/certification/)

6.2.7 Environmentally-friendly packaging

In the interviews, when I raised the good treatment of the environment (beyond soil treatment) as a value, a couple of members brought up ‘food miles’ and the use of harmful chemicals in cleaning products. By far, the issue that was of the most concern was the impact of environmentally-damaging packaging on the environment—a problematic by-product of the MFC (Wiskerke, 2009). The original Interview Guides did not ask specific questions about packaging. The first member interviewed expressed the desire to prioritise more environmentally-friendly[40] packaging as a GFC value. When the third interviewee also raised this concern, I included questions about packaging in the remaining interviews.

The need to move food from producers to suppliers while containing and preserving the food’s quality as much as possible, means that packaging is often a substantial component of food distribution. It has cost impacts for suppliers and consumers, and consequences for the environment because of its production or its disposal after being used to transport and preserve food. As plastic has become one of the most-used packaging materials, combining both preservation qualities and lower costs, consumers are increasingly becoming concerned about plastic’s detrimental consequences for the environment (van Herpen et al., 2016).

Packaging is becoming more important to Hannah. She thinks both members and suppliers need to commit to improving in this area: suppliers, to consider how they can use better packaging materials, especially to reduce their reliance on plastic packaging; and members, to reuse packaging, whether glass, plastic, or cardboard containers. Approximately half of her current members bring packaging to send back to suppliers for reuse. She thinks the others just find it easier to recycle. “Maybe that’s something that we can grow in our club ... to emphasize that [reusing packaging] is an important value.” She believes members and suppliers need to work together to avoid using plastic at all.

[40] It’s difficult to choose adequate terminology. Most packaging is disposed of once it has transported goods. There will always be a detrimental impact on the environment, the question is by what degree? Because of the nature of this packaging, it’s not adequate to describe it in terms of ‘environmentally-friendly’ or ‘-friendlier’. However, it’s used in this thesis in this discussion about ethical packaging.

She believes better packaging is often more expensive than packaging that is worse for the environment. Her members might not be willing to pay more for biodegradable bags instead of plastic, and suppliers might not be willing to lose the sales because of price increases.

6.2.7.1 Reflections from members

All but the one member who wasn't directly asked affirmed the wish to support and promote the use of environmentally-friendly packaging through GFC purchases. Packaging concerns have grown in the past few years. Plastic packaging now bothers Kim quite a lot when it didn't previously. "That is a new problem for me."

Members examined their own packaging behaviours as consumers, but also specifically acknowledged how difficult it is to avoid plastic packaging. Louise is careful about packaging she's willing to buy, but sees that for some types of products, such as meat, it's only practical to use plastic. Stuart has "always" tried to recycle packaging, but now is trying to avoid buying plastic packaging.

Members think most suppliers are consciously trying to use better packaging, but also see room for improvement. Stuart thinks most GFC suppliers are "generally aware" about packaging, which shows in the glass and boxes they use; but he named one supplier providing pantry items in plastic bags as a supplier that's "not very good" as a "benchmark."[41] Rachel thinks GFC suppliers are ethical in this regard, "either by using biodegradable packaging or reusing the packaging to avoid once-off waste." Louise thinks some GFC suppliers are further along than others in their "journey" to pursue more ethical packaging, although possibly not all are open to ideas for improvement.

Some members believe the use of more biodegradable packaging would be a welcome improvement. However, the member who had done the most research on the subject was cautious. "There's a lot of greenwashing in packaging… we need to be careful with that." She has researched such products and has learned many are only biodegradable under commercial conditions - "… probably better than plastic, but it's not a lot better than plastic."

[41] It's important to note that members buy a proportionally large volume of items from this supplier, as compared with other suppliers.

The way most members think suppliers can improve is by reducing the amount of packaging used. Sal brought up the unavoidable need to use plastic to package meat, but she thinks there are ways to use less. She complained about an unnecessary use of additional polystyrene. She would like to encourage GFC suppliers to improve their packaging by using less plastic or finding alternatives to plastic. Jessy added that she'd like suppliers to use packaging that's recyclable or reusable. "I don't want to see styrofoam again. [LAUGHS]"

Contributors to the deepening of this value have come from within the GFC and from outside. For Rachel:

> The GFC itself has educated and raised my awareness about the importance of this by making it more possible to reuse and recycle the packaging through this community. It has made me think about what I am throwing away and the consequence of this.

For two members, their awareness was influenced by the higher profile of environmental concerns in the media—the *Zeitgeist*, as Kim referred to it earlier. Stuart observed that the subject of packaging "definitely is topical." He credits conversations with peers as the biggest influence. An additional influence for Louise has been her own research of "environmentally-ethical" packaging.

6.2.7.2 Reflections from suppliers

Every supplier indicated attempts to improve their packaging, according to their differing understanding of what makes packaging better. Jim's farm made the choice to change 80% of their packaging to glass. They run a refund scheme with their customers for glass containers, and Jim claims 60-70% of their glass containers are returned. Rita researched extensively the best packaging to use for her olive products. She assessed options not only by material composition, but also the transport and warehousing involved. Rita challenged conventional wisdom that glass is best because it's recyclable. She claims that in South Africa "glass recycling isn't very good." Glass is also heavy and voluminous to transport. She also wants to decrease the amount of carbon going back into the environment from glass recycling. She believes their pouches made from nylon foil and laminate are an environmental improvement on glass. They designed this packaging to use the "least amount of carbon and still satisfy most people."

Suppliers spoke about factors that keep them from using their 'ideal' packaging, with key constraints being technological unavailability and high cost—or a combination of the two. Alison's business sells dry goods, many of which they import. The key determining factor for their packaging is the preservation of quality. They've trialled selling their shop goods in different biodegradable packaging, without success, because the packaging significantly decreased the shelf-life. They continue trying new products as they become available with new technology. She expressed a willingness to work with GFCs to use biodegradable packaging, on the assumption that most members decant their purchases into airtight containers at home.

Stefan's chocolate company only uses plant-based inks on their packaging, and they are currently researching packaging that will be home-compostable.[42] It wasn't previously available because the technology wasn't ready; now he can access it, but it's expensive. Prices have come down enough that they "can try make it work", but then the price of their products will increase, and consumers then might choose not to buy them.

Sharmaine also acknowledged they would pass the costs for better packaging onto their customers, but she isn't concerned they would lose customers. Currently, her farm distributes its products in cardboard, cellulose packs and plastic punnets. GFC members return much of the packaging to the farm for reuse. But Sharmaine is working with a man who is investigating good quality biodegradable packaging produced only in Germany. Sharmaine has reason to hope that once he settles on a product, he will produce it in South Africa. She claims biodegradable packaging is "going to take over South Africa" because European consumers won't accept South African exports packed in plastic for much longer.

Murray wasn't concerned as much about cost as he was about the availability of the "biodynamic" packaging his business would like to use. His butchery products need packaging that can hold moisture and blood. He knows that when a customer "receives a piece of meat and it's bloody, and the packaging is blown, and it's messy, it puts them off completely, whether the meat is ethically-farmed or sustainably sourced or not." He's working with other suppliers in the meat industry, including a meat farmer supplying the GFC, to source a

[42] As compared to being biodegradable only at an industrial level.

biodegradable alternative to plastic that can hold up to the carriage demands of products seeping blood.

The different strategies taken by suppliers to address the problem of packaging highlights the complexity of factors involved in being environmentally-friendly. For suppliers, the practical necessities for adequate packaging are in contention with consumers' aspirations for the most ethical packaging.

6.2.8 Values not mentioned

When asked if any important values were missing from those presented in the interview, Hannah immediately responded with, “Good, wholesome food being accessible… as a human right”—not dependent upon economic status (Barnhill & Doggett, 2018). “How that plays out… I think we have to be very, very creative.” Of the members, only Louise raised this as a value not asked about.

Jessy raised inclusion as a value, referring to GFCs as closed groups, with more interest for joining than there is space to accept members. She also wishes that more people had access to information that would educate them about the food system.

On the supply-side, Murray would like to see GFC conveners push his company for meat that is affordable for people with less cash in their food budgets. He has seen little initiative for this.

Stefan, the chocolate producer, asked how important nutritional concerns about sugar would become for our GFCs. “Because there's a big move… away from sugar… is that something that's gonna *become* [EMPHASIS HIS] important for you guys?” (As a convener, I told him some clubs were more focused on such concerns than others, depending on their groups' priorities. But I didn't believe his it would ever be true for every club.)

From the beginning of the GFC, Hannah and I, as founders, wished to support black-owned businesses—but we didn't easily find them. Two black-owned businesses currently supply us. Ultimately, we decided that supporting black-owned businesses would be a long-term vision. In the meantime, we'd work to create market pathways for small producers that we hope will eventually support emerging black-owned businesses. None of the members brought this up as a value that they think is explicitly missing from the matrix.

6.3 Reflections on these values as discussed

Although there are some commonalities, members ascribed varying weights to the different values. They also shared about the values driving their motivations, whether changes have happened, or if there's been a deepening. In this section, I explore themes that I drew from these findings.

6.3.1 Conscious-consumption and growth of GFC members

Corsi and Novelli (2016) describe one motivation of SPGs as raising consumer consciousness. Every member reflected that they have grown in their consciousness as food consumers through their GFC participation, becoming more informed, supporting alignment or deepened commitment to associated values. Kim's approach to food has changed over the time she's been a GFC member. Catherine has also experienced deepening consciousness as a food consumer:

> I suppose what I'm learning through this conversation with you is how there were certain values that attracted me to the Good Food Club. But that it's been a two-way process, that I've actually evolved as well… my values have been refined, and I've been exposed to things that I wouldn't have thought of before… some of these values that I have now, that are important to me now, I realise weren't there at the beginning. They've been part of the journey of Good Food Club that I've grown as well… as a more critical consumer.

Some influences came from peers, or from media sources, but their GFC involvement also plays a role to varying degrees. Stuart summarised it:

> It's good to have the exposure and to- to question things a bit more than just a transactional economy. Yah. I think we tend to that because it's the easy way out… You don't have to engage and don't have to ask questions about where things are coming from. But, yah. That's not a good way of living.

He said, "I definitely think that being part of the group opens up those conversations."

6.3.2 Food knowledge as transformative

It's assumed that as members became increasingly reflexive, more informed as consumers, they came to care about more aspects of ethical food production and distribution than simply their own economic benefit from the supply. The question then is: did this consciousness translate into transformed consumer behaviour? While members spoke about having changed in the ways they approach food provisioning, they also gave some examples of these changes.

Some members have changed their meat consumption behaviour. Two households have stopped eating meat, and a third now eats more. Two members now won't order meat in restaurants if they don't know about the way the animals were farmed.

One member spoke about changes in her family's use of cleaning chemicals. Rachel's family started using products that are more environmentally-friendly because of what she has learned about ingredients through her GFC involvement. GFC involvement has "had a big effect and influence on me… and my family."

Members have changed their behaviour regarding better packaging. Stuart has progressed from a focus on recycling plastic to altogether reducing the purchase of goods in single-use plastic. As a supplier, Jim shared that members return 60% of glass containers to his farm for reuse, a percentage that has grown.

Members showed desire to provision more of their food via the GFC, but they acknowledged the challenges involved with being better organised to purchase monthly. Some members affirmed the benefits they've experienced because of better planning. As Rachel said, "I've started to know now what I need for a month."

Not all increases in awareness have transformed to changed consumer behaviour. Barriers to transformation seem to be:

- When change is too inconvenient. Members feel that the GFC offers ethically better goods than the supermarkets offer; but they perceive provisioning via the GFC as more inconvenient in terms of time spent collecting at market days, frequency of provisioning, or logistics when returning items.

- When members choose to turn a ‘blind eye’ to information they suspect but don’t want to know about the supply-chain. Catherine admitted turning “a blind eye” when she assumed there was information about producers that wouldn’t confirm that ethical standards were being adhered to.
- When they want ‘preferred goods’, even if possibly more ethical options are available, or the goods don’t align with members’ values. Sometimes the taste for specific products trumps ethical shortfalls.
- When goods are technologically or systemically unavailable. Even when there’s knowledge and informed trust, sometimes ideal goods are inaccessible. Examples of this are packaging that’s the home-compostable ideal; or meat that hasn’t been supplied via the state-regulated abattoir system.
- When information or understanding about food system or supplier realities is lacking. One member called this having “blind spots.” In fact, there was tacit acknowledgement that there will always be blind spots that need to be made visible.

6.3.3 Knowing food as a journey

There will always be more to learn about how our food is made and comes to our tables. In order to see ongoing transformed behaviour, Fonte states there is the need for “continuous reflection” (Fonte, 2013, p. 238). In multiple interviews, members described their transforming food consumption as a ‘journey’. The journey applies for the GFC as a collective, for members as individual food consumers, and for suppliers.

The GFC itself, as one strategy for food provisioning, has developed from the time it began, and continues to evolve at present. As one member said, “You don't wake up one morning and decide, ‘Oh, this is what we're going to do.’ It's… evolved into. And as it's grown, you've had to put things in place… as the journey's gone along.” The GFC as a purchase group formed and developed over time, and this development continues.

Perhaps the more important journey to reflect on here is the one members make as 'conscious consumers'. In the interview, Hannah and I, as co-founders, discussed our own evolution as food consumers over the twelve years we have run the GFC. I said to Hannah:

> With values regarding growing understanding of ethical choices… there's a growing. You have reflected to me before that you're on a journey. That you really have seen this as a journey, that there's small steps taken, that over time you turn and you look back and you say, "Big changes have been made."

The metaphor of a 'journey' is apt: journeys describe distances travelled over time. Changes in eating habits that reflect in purchasing behaviours get made in small increments—which slowly add up to dramatic change in the long-term.

The interplay between our family members, our household budgets, and the way we eat, is constantly changing. Hannah looked back over the years and realised how much her family's eating habits changed. We affirmed commitment to the journey, to never stop learning, because the geographies of food systems are complex, and there are many factors to consider in decision-making; therefore, there's always more to learn.

Our members also seemed to understand the constant state of learning and evolving behaviour. As one member stated, "I've really grown enormously… and I recognise that I've still got a long way to go. I'm still [PAUSE] trying to wrap my head around some of these issues." When speaking about his pursuit of better packaging, Stuart spoke about his changing behaviour as a "progression." Another said, "It's a journey. And it continues to be a journey."

Some members observed that suppliers are on journeys. One member stated, "I think they're on a journey. And I think some are further along than others." They believe the GFC can engage constructively with suppliers to bring about improvements, with grace for time to make improvements. However, the same member quoted above went on to surmise that she didn't think every supplier would be open to engaging about improvements.

Suppliers understand themselves to be on a journey. This showed in their pursuit of better packaging, and the ongoing decisions they must weigh up for their businesses.

6.4 Contributors to growth as 'conscious consumers'

Key contributors to growth as 'conscious consumers' were identified. For Jessy, "It's been education, and it's been community, I think." 'Education' and 'community' are helpful delineations to list the significant contributors as mentioned by members.

6.4.1 Education as a contributor

Accessible information is the main currency for raising consumer consciousness. Exposure to information comes via both the GFC and outside sources. The key conveyors of information as expressed by members are:

- The general media. There's been growing interest in the subject of ethical eating (one member called it the 'Zeitgeist'), so it is topical in the general media. Books, articles, podcasts, documentaries and blogs on the wider subject abound. However, certain values are more the spirit of the time than others. Environmental concerns (as affected by soil treatment, farming-for-meat, packaging and distribution transport) and treatment of animals seem to be the predominant topics; 'local' and 'small' have also gained attention. The treatment of employees doesn't appear to have the same place of priority in media discussions.

Education comes through GFC involvement from:

- Conveners as interlocutors. Members repeatedly affirmed that a sizeable portion of the information they get about suppliers or the food system comes from their conveners. This information is conveyed by direct conversations, by GFC-related emails (the most regular, consistent mode of information transference), and by informational documents made available to members—whether written by the convener or by someone else. Bits of information transferred over time, and over many conversations and emails, have increased awareness and understanding. The conveners also often act as intermediaries when members request more information from suppliers. As interlocutors, conveners communicate meaning, personal reflections and interpretations as they transmit information.

- Access to suppliers. Members rarely signal a need to have questions directly addressed by suppliers, but they value that they can get information first-hand if they want it.
- Access to information. When members wish for more understanding about GFC suppliers specifically, there is general satisfaction that they have access to the "tools to be properly informed," as one member stated.

6.4.2 Community as a contributor

Some contributors to growth are more embodied than the simple transfer of information itself. Members specified these contributors as:

- Their peers. A few members spoke of conversations they've had with friends about ethical eating, perhaps a result of the *Zeitgeist*. Beyond exchanging information, observing their peers' lifestyles and choices is also impactful.

Inside GFC:

- Market day interactions. The business of food being delivered, organised, and collected at market day gives time and place for many social interactions. Conversations, seeing food others have ordered, and volunteering, for example, all provide something more than simply collecting food. For Jessy:

> …being surrounded by people who have a similar values system… it sort of fires what's inside you, and it's easier to act on it… and seeing other people make good choices encourages you to make better choices as well.

Other than information accessed through the general media, everything listed above reflects the relationally-embedded nature of the contributors to members' growth as conscious consumers.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The findings in the previous two chapters show that GFC members participate in the GFC not only to access quality food at better prices, and but also to use their food budgets to support a better agrifood system for the country. GFC suppliers reflected similar motivations for participation in what they consider to be supply-chains that are more ethical. Sal used the phrase “doing justice in the way we eat” to describe her GFC membership. She described ‘doing justice’ as buying food that’s ethically-produced, and that people are being justly rewarded for farming it; that every person and animal involved in the supply-chain, from the animals to the people who bring it to us, are all treated with dignity and justice.[43] Can the act of eating be an act of doing justice through an attempt at food system transformation?

This chapter draws from the findings and analysis in the previous two chapters, to offer discussion and conclusions about the activism of the GFC in Cape Town. It begins by connecting research findings back to the aims and objectives.

7.1 GFC as an SPG in Cape Town, South Africa

The GFC began in the suburbs of Cape Town, with a group of educated, middle-class, mostly white, mostly women, who began organising for collective food provisioning. Within its setting, it developed in similar ways to AFNs of the global North. As noted by Battersby et al (2015), AFNs formed similarly to the GFC are a nascent movement in South Africa; Abrahams (2006) has explained that AFNs in a global South setting like Cape Town are different than their Northern namesakes in their motivations and aims.

In this written history of the GFC, contributions from founders, members and suppliers show that the GFC functions as an SPG that has adapted to its unique context. The organisational structure of the collective is different from SPGs elsewhere, in Italy, for example, where supplier relationships are ideally the shared responsibility of members (Forno et al., 2015; Grasseni, 2013; Hankins & Grasseni, 2014). According to this criterion, the GFC isn’t an SPG.

[43] As discussed in Chapter 2, the term ‘food justice’ needs to be held as distinct when discussing AFNs. In no way can the GFC as described in this document be framed as a food justice movement. Sal’s use of the term would more accurately be described by the term ‘food ethics’ (Barnhill & Doggett, 2018).

The GFC began as a purchase group, but interactions with food producers and suppliers gave relational space to make the supply-chains more visible, as well as the dynamics of the food system governing these supply-chains (Little et al., 2010). The shift in core motivating values, from desire for personal benefit to benefitting all involved in food production and distribution, is what marks the GFC as an SPG, according to Schifani and Migliore's (2011) and Grasseni's (2013) characterisation that has been applied throughout this thesis. Even the changing understanding of the values matrix, which guides decisions about which suppliers to support, points to the conscious nature of an SPG as supported by Hankins and Grasseni's writing (2014).

This word 'solidarity' speaks to Brueggemann's (2010) concepts of neighbourhood, imagining a food economy built on concern for every person involved in a food system, rather than merely a complex web of financial transactions. In the case of South Africa, this concern would extend to include solidarity with those who are excluded from the system.

In the previous two chapters, I discussed and analysed findings regarding benefits and challenges for members and suppliers, and contributors to values. The rest of this chapter presents conclusions, by exploring clear themes from the findings and analyses.

7.2 Supermarkets and unknowing

Members' involvement in the GFC is in many ways a conscious response to the supermarket dominance of the food supply-chain, and consequent imbalances. This is well-documented as a primary motivator driving involvement in AFNs in the global North (Forssell & Lankoski, 2014; Giampietri et al., 2018), including SPGs (Little et al., 2010). In South Africa, where the consolidation of the agri-food system is entrenched, supermarkets are the default shopping mode for most people at least sometimes (Greenberg, 2017). For food consumers, they make it easy to provision food, if one has money to pay.

Members' strong push against supermarkets stems from the information asymmetry they experience, whereby food moves through multiple supply links from farm-gates or primary processors to shop shelves (Brunori et al., 2016; De Fazio, 2016; Demartini et al., 2017). Because of the lack of supply-chain transparency, they feel the distance from the producers and production of their food that Kloppenburg et al. (1996) and DuPuis and Goodman (2005) describe. They have questions, but little access to the information that would give answers. Supermarkets don’t offer relational connection that could give consumers access to producers in order to learn more (Sage, 2007). This leaves members mistrustful of supermarkets when it comes to ethical standards of the goods they supply, because they don’t offer adequate information or access to supply-chain transparency.

Echoing the perspectives of Giampietri et al. (2018) and Renting et al. (2003) characterising the MFC as anonymous, members described supermarkets as “anonymous.” They want to know the people involved in the supply-chains, because they want to better understand the ethe, practices, and methods governing their production of food (Renting et al., 2003). One member explained:

> When you get a box of produce directly from the farm, and it's so beautiful!… When we first started getting the spinach, I would literally put a big vase here [POINTS TO CENTRE OF DINING ROOM TABLE] [LAUGHS] almost as a flower arrangement. Yah, that you start valuing the food, and the work that went into it, and the beauty of it, and just kind of being grateful for the food. And then that made me think more about where it's coming from, you know?… when it doesn't come to you all chopped and in plastic and on a shelf in a fridge. That really distances one from food as… something that's part of the whole chain that didn't just get made in a factory, you know?

This desire for more transparency is expressed at both ends of the supply-chain. Suppliers want to know more about the people consuming their goods, they would like more relational access to educate and get feedback about their products.

7.2.1 Departing the system

Members don’t trust the dominant supermarket system of South Africa to give access to food supplied ethically. Reflecting Bauler et al. (2011) and Brueggemann’s (2010) framing, they spoke about avoiding them for food provisioning as much as possible—the wish to ‘depart’ or ‘exit’ the MFC and participate in an alternative, more ethical food system. Members don’t believe transformation can come from within the supermarketised MFC.

Some suppliers also wish to circumvent the supermarkets as customers. In this way, the GFC is aligned more with the AFNs of Europe that position themselves as alternative to the MFC, than those of North America that have formed primarily to voice opposition to the system (Abrahams, 2006; Allen et al., 2003; Bauler et al., 2011).

7.3 Connection and embodied knowledge

Papaoikonomou and Ginieis (2017) have framed AFNs as a response to the 'placeless' and 'faceless' nature of the MFC. This was expressed by one member when he explained his GFC involvement as motivated by "knowing exactly" what he's buying because of a more transparent supply-chain. Members want information about the production and distribution methods of the food they buy, so they use their purchase power to reflect their values. Knowledge about the supply-chain drives the perception of a closer connection to food production and consumption, closing the distance between producers and consumers. One member explained:

> I think when moving closer to the source of where the food's produced, I was given opportunity to think about things, and have more agency, and be able to find out, ask questions, becoming a lot more… of a… network… where you could actually trace food to- to the source. As opposed to, um, just walking into a shop, staffed by people I don't know, food that I have no idea where it came from.

Wider than solely wanting information factoids about their food, members aspire to a sense of *knowing* the people involved in the supply of their food - *knowing* that comes embedded in relational connection, enabling the reciprocal flow of communication and information (Bos & Owen, 2016).

The relationships between the suppliers and GFC conveners are seen to be pathways for sharing not only product and process information, but also suppliers' values, character and personality—(re)establishing 'place' and 'face' in their food supply. These connections give the perception of closing the distance between food production and food consumption (Cook, 2006).

For members as an AFN collective, it's this embodied knowledge that gives entrée to understanding the realities of food production and distribution (Cook, 2006; Little et al., 2010); when it doesn't provide full information, the relationship provides the growth medium for future knowledge. The relationships also generate trust in the suppliers, even when full details are absent (Giampietri et al., 2018).

This knowing is possible because the GFC operates as both a face-to-face SFSC and a proximate SFSC, depending on whether the convener interacts directly with the producers or close intermediaries (Marsden, 2000; Renting et al., 2003, Sage, 2003). While AFNs seek to minimise the number of intermediaries in supply chains (Forssell & Lankoski, 2014), GFC members seem to understand intermediaries are sometimes unavoidable, and thus value them relationally as suppliers.

Suppliers benefit from trust-laden relationships with collectives of conscious consumers, who regularly order, and are low-maintenance customers. However, some aren't satisfied that enough feedback and information travels back to them from members.

In this way, as Bos et al. (2016) commenting on Fonte's research findings (2013), observed that information shared online can enhance members' learning about suppliers, and vice versa, but they couldn't replace personal interactions for better knowledge and connection. Members and suppliers wish for more than what they learn from emails; they want more embodied knowledge of each other.

7.3.1 Conveners as interlocutors and bottle-necks

All members expressed varying levels of trust for suppliers based on their trust in their conveners as intermediaries, and their assumptions about the quality of conveners' ongoing connections with suppliers. This trust grows as information about suppliers is shared and made accessible to them by the conveners. This connection is perceived as being rooted in the "good" relationship their conveners have with suppliers, and in assumptions that the conveners are continuously vetting suppliers for their adherence to ethical.

As a convener, it's fascinating to hear the assumptions members make that conveners thoroughly and continuously vet suppliers. The simple fact is, for every supplier I interact with on behalf of my fellow members, I lack complete information about their production and distribution methods. There are always 'blind spots', there's always more to learn, and limitations of my own time are ever present. It's even true to say that sometimes I, a convener, turn a 'blind eye' to questions I don't want to interrogate too closely because the answers could force relationship changes or endings. There are questions that are still awkward to ask relationally. I feel the burden of making decisions when considering gaps in my knowledge as measured against our values matrix.

As much as members express trust in their conveners to keep a watch over supply chain values, they also want more information about suppliers. They expressed ambivalence about their 'proximate relationships' with suppliers that they've outsourced to their conveners. They would like more information about suppliers, and they believe this would best happen with face-to-face contact. But they are also pragmatic about their own time limitations. Their own lack of time capacity overrides their desire for direct contact with suppliers. Therefore, members seem resigned to their proximate positioning, and are willing to rely on the conveners' roles as interlocutors for information to flow.

Most suppliers wish for more direct contact with members to be able to educate them about their ethics, give product information, and receive feedback about their products. In the current structure, they would generally wish for more information to travel both ways via the conveners.

With both suppliers and members wishing for more information about each other, the role of convener as interlocutor has become a bottle-neck. It takes time and graft to keep abreast of the constantly adapting businesses for thirty suppliers. Like members, conveners are busy people with their own challenges of resources and capacity.

7.3.2 Routinised practices and sharing events

The GFC collective can support ethical food supply only as much as information about the food system and suppliers is thorough and accurate, and only as much as we have technical understanding of the information. This problem of the information bottle-neck needs to be addressed, but it won't be solved by giving more work to the conveners. This is an opportunity for imagining ways that members can share the responsibility of gaining knowledge—specifically embodied knowledge.

Whether this happens by hosting sharing events (for example, Meet the Supplier' evenings or farm visits) or establishing more structures to support 'routinised practices' (for example, forming member portfolio committees, or members helping with website content) (Papaoikonomou & Ginieis, 2017), the path forward toward deeper consumer consciousness must include participation and shared responsibility from more members. It would be unrealistic to expect higher levels of sustained involvement from every member. Even within Italy's GAS, some people do much more work than others, and turnout at sharing events isn't always high (Brunori et al., 2012). But more division of the work of the GFC would be necessary to develop in further notions of solidarity.

Beyond sharing the workload, I believe more sharing events and routinised practices are essential for the GFC collective to bend into the 'solidarity' aspect of being an SPG. It's important for members to develop individually as 'conscious consumers'; it is equally important for the collective to grow as a social movement. To this end, market days in their current form are pivotal as routinised practice and sharing events, but they are not enough to fulfil the solidarity aspirations of the GFC. Papaoikonomou & Ginieis (2017) quoted a sharing event invitation as a space to "meet, celebrate, and strengthen our agro-ecological identities" (p. 58). There is much shared work needed, but the joy is that it's the socially-embedded, embodied work of the GFC as a community—of members, conveners, and suppliers.

This of course must be held within the realities of time-constraints. The very nature of AFNs is that they require heavy inputs of time for at least some actors, and it seems even more so for FCNs. In this research project, members, suppliers, and conveners bemoaned their own time constraints. It's realistic to assume that some members won't be able or willing to contribute more time to the collective work of the GFCs; but it can also be safely assumed that some will welcome opportunities to become more involved.

7.3.3 Economics of Connection

The GFC collective relies on reciprocal trust created by ongoing and deepening connections with suppliers, the 'relationships of regard' that Sage (2003) describes. Ian Cook wrote the term 'economics of connection' when exploring the topic of food sources (Cook, 2006). The term applies when analysing how reconnecting consumers to producers can change economic power balances and agency in the supply interactions:

- As reflected in Grasseni's (2014) writing, members trust knowledge of suppliers more than the 'institutionalised trust' in certifications or labels claiming quality standards. This benefits suppliers because they can forgo the expense of certifications. They can instead rely on the trust generated by the embodied connections with their consumers, as discussed by Hughes (2006) and other scholars (Papaoikonomou & Ginieis, 2017; Renting et al., 2003).

- Members trust suppliers to set fair prices for the goods they supply.
- Suppliers benefit from the GFC as values customers who show loyalty to suppliers' products. As the GFC is perceived to purchase according to a high ethical standard, non-GFC consumers also trust GFC suppliers.
- Suppliers trust the GFC to pay promptly, and to be honest about product problems or shortfalls.

Connection to the economic good of South Africa has grown in importance to members, primarily because of learning more about the people and businesses supplying the GFC. Similar to many Northern AFN, as discussed by Seyfang (2006) and Papaoikonomou and Ginieis (2017), the desire to shorten distribution distances in order to reduce fuel consumption was a factor for most members when they joined the GFC. The economic benefit for the country's economy has become their motivator for wanting to support 'local' businesses. As Rachel said, "It feels very important to be supporting 'South African local'"—because of the country's very high rate of unemployment. With this understanding, members apply Granvik et al. (2017) and Morris and Buller's (2003) concepts of 'flexible localism' with desire to support rural South African farms, prioritising this over the greater distances used to transport food from these farms.

However, without more interrogation of the other scales by which these businesses should be analysed within the whole system, even with these honourable intentions it's possible that we fall prey to the 'local trap'.

7.3.4 "Better than"

Members described the GFC as a unique vehicle for buying food according to their values. They weren't aware of other initiatives by which they could access modes of value-laden purchasing as described by Guthman (2003) and Renting et al. (2003)—or at least at the costs and volumes they can as part of the collective. One member described herself as a consumer before her GFC involvement: “I've always been inclined towards justice… but didn't really have… a vehicle for how to do things better.” Two members observed that, judging by the growing numbers of members and GFCs, this model is fulfilling a growing consumer desire for innovative and value-laden vehicle strategies.

This was tempered by the understanding of its limitations for providing food produced with the highest ethical standards in every regard. Even as every member interviewed spoke positively about suppliers’ ethics, this sentiment surfaced in different ways in multiple interviews when discussing various ethical standards. Fonte (2013)observed that *GAS* in Italy aren’t a full ethical replacement of the MFC. Similarly, as a vehicle for purchasing ethically-produced food, the GFC is deemed to be, as one member said, “better than” any other current options, but not the ideal.

7.4 GFCs and the common good

7.4.1 GFCs as part of an alternative food geography

As much as some members believe their GFC participation to be the work of food justice (e.g. as described by Cadieux and Slocum (2015), the scope of their collective activities falls short of their aspirations. It’s within the concept of the alternative food geography as offered by Wiskerke (2009), with the GFC as one small AFN functioning within a regional landscape of other strategies and dimensions, that any contribution to the common good could be acknowledged—however small. A small network of mostly white, middle-class suburbanites cannot reform food supply in the country. It’s helpful to remember that there are many other actors and institutions at work within this geography as well.

As one AFN within this geography, does the GFC work only for the good of its participating band of consumers and suppliers, or does it also contribute to the common good of others? To answer this question, it’s necessary to look at ways that the GFC has been shown to impact (or not) the economic, social, or environmental wellbeing of people within this geography.

7.4.2 Economic good

Further corporatisation of South Africa's agrifood system will ultimately not be good for South Africans. Although corporate retailers sometimes offer cheaper prices for consumers, the corporate food processors and retailers are driving the whole system. With the pressure for South African farms to scale-up for supplying supermarkets, small producers and processors need market pathways for their goods. The shortened GFC supply-chains provide a counter-weight to the size they lack, to keep their costs down, enabling them to supply goods at more affordable prices to GFC consumers.

The dominance of supermarket corporations has become such that they are price-setters within the South African agrifood system (Greenberg, 2017). Within the GFC relationships of regard, power swings back to producers/suppliers, giving them the power to be price-setters in transactions.

Through the GFC, consumers with adequate income are able to support those 'missing middle' agrifood businesses that Greenberg describes (2015). From the other end, suppliers have access to collectives of conscious consumers who will buy their goods on a regular basis. As each market pathway is forged between a supplier and the GFC, it makes way for new supply relationships to access the same path.

Generally, GFC members believe their collective gives them more choices for buying ethically-produced food, even when their range of food choices are more limited than at supermarkets. They can access goods that might not be offered at supermarkets or are too expensive to buy in sufficient quantities from specialty retailers.

This access, however, doesn't extend to most of the consumer-public. Even if they wanted to, most of Cape Town's residents can't participate in the GFCs in their current forms. The model relies on the suppliers receiving order volumes that make the transactions beneficial to fulfil. Collective monthly orders from food clubs leverage supply scales that make doing business with GFCs sufficiently profitable. As covered in Chapter 5, the average grocery expenditure per person in a GFC household is ZAR2,500/ month. Consequently, collectively we can make generous purchases from suppliers. In contrast, 61.5% of Capetonians can't afford a basic nutritional food basket that would cost ZAR2,524/ month to feed four people. [44] Their inability to access sufficient nutritious food is a food injustice (Barnhill & Doggett, 2018).

It follows then that most Capetonians don't have the cash-flow to lay-out money to purchase monthly food stores at the scale of GFC members. To add to this, every GFC member interviewed owns at least one car per household, by which they can transport big orders of food home from market days; whereas most people in the city rely on the use of public transportation.

The GFC is rooted within the privilege and wealth of South Africa's economic disparities, accessible only to those living within the top band of the country's wealth. These numbers highlight the inescapable fact that the GFC in its current model is situated as if an AFN of the global North. If parts of the GFC model could be useful to emulate in less-resourced communities, it would be essential to integrate them with the dominant AFN activities as they currently exist in South Africa.

Social networks-based AFNs, such as *stokvels*, are already established in many communities, as shown by Lakhani (2014) and Misselhorn (2009); they could be adapted for other kinds of collective food purchasing. Paraphrasing Herman et al. (2018, p. 7), the question that needs to be wrestled with is: How could opportunities for these communities be enhanced to connect to food systems which give them access to good food? AFNs can be newly imagined and designed as contextual responses to support cash-poor communities' access to good food. Challenges would need to be addressed, such as suppliers' needs for sizeable orders as balanced against cash-poor people's need to buy smaller quantities of food more regularly. This merits research in the context of specific communities.

7.4.3 Environmental good

This research project highlighted consumers' perceptions that much is hidden in South Africa's MFC. As has been stated by Greenberg (2017), there hasn't been a thorough mapping of the country's agrifood system. This research has affirmed that it is difficult to access complete production and supply chain information about such things as the fair treatment of

[44] See Chapter 2, Section 2.3.2

employees, and ethical treatment of animals, the soil and the environment in South Africa's supply-chains.

In addition, for members and suppliers to determine what 'the best' or most ethical practices are, they need to be assessed within the layers of the food system. Outcomes need to be planned for, and then appropriate scales applied. This complexity-approach is often missing from members' understanding of specific values, and sometimes from suppliers' understanding. For example, when discussing which packaging would be least damaging to the environment, other than strong opinions about single-use plastic, a variety of opinions and understanding were expressed by members and suppliers. But determining the 'best' packaging requires multi-criterion decision-making with accurate inputs of information (e.g., information about materials, supply chains, local recycling systems, fuel inputs for production and transportation, water use for production, etc.). Another example, members assume their purchases have lighter ecological impact when buying local, without assessing that one factor (buying local) within the wider systems.

Members showed quite shallow understandings of farming production methods regarding treatment of the soil, and how such standards apply to their suppliers. There was trust expressed without adequate knowledge to justify their trust.

It would be difficult to affirm that the GFCs currently contribute to the environmental good of the country.

7.4.4 Social good

It's appropriate to question the quality and thoroughness of knowledge that GFC members have regarding their suppliers, but there's no doubt the proximate-SFSC nature of the GFC as described by Renting et al. (2003) and other scholars gives members access to more supply-chain information and embodied knowledge of suppliers than they would have through the MFC. Members show a deepened consumer consciousness because of their growing understanding, fuelling a commitment to the unending journey of food consciousness.

Based on the premise that they will at very least leverage their food budgets to strengthen a more just food economy, it's sometimes assumed the increased consciousness of food consumers benefits society. This premise is criticised as naïve or unsupported, and this consumer-consciousness suggested to be the domain of the middle-class ‘angster’ that Haysom (2016) critically described. There is validity to this criticism, and it surely has been true that every GFC convener and member has been an ‘angster’ at different times—and possibly is still true at present for some. But this cynicism should be held in tension with the deep changes in consumer behaviour for members and their households. It bids the question: Can it be bad for a society to have food consumers become more informed about the supply chains and systems supplying their food? I support Dixon and Richard’s (2016) argument that it is beneficial to have consumers become “more food literate” (p. 193).

Grasseni (2013) maintains that by the collective activities of SPGs “we are reinventing time, place, and quality, treating them as non-measurable items and as common resources—hence not as commodities, but rather as commons” (p. 21). As the GFC has purchased and distributed food together over more than a decade, it's provisioning activities have been greater than the sum of their financial transactions. When a GFC member left South Africa in 2015, she wrote this in an email to Hannah and me:

> I just also want to reiterate what a fantastic thing it is that you two do with the GFC. Not only providing ethical shopping opportunities and job sustainability but also promoting friendship and fun and setting the agenda for good discussion and lifestyle challenges in this unfair world... I have loved being part of it and will miss the monthly Friday chaos!

These observations are a window to the ‘more-than-food’ liminal and generative nature of AFN activities as embedded within social relationships and the systems within which we source food, as supported by literature from Goodman (2016) and Grasseni (2013).

7.4.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the GFC exists as one small AFN involving a relatively small number of actors within wider agrifood systems–regional, national, and global. There are global powers and systems exerting pressure, and South Africa’s agrifood system itself is dominated by powerful corporate players. The South African food consumer is at the mercy of food choices and high food prices as offered by the supermarkets. In this environment, the GFC offers consumers an alternative based on the values of a more socially-embedded food economy. However, its scope for expansion as it is today, is limited by its exclusivity within the South African socioeconomic landscape. Any contribution to the common good needs to be accepted as impactful for the actors involved, with aspirations to strengthen an alternative system for other initiatives to form.

7.5 Concluding this research project

This research was undertaken to write the history of the Good Food Club as an SPG in Cape Town, South Africa, drawing from the collective memory of its participant consumers and suppliers. Members and suppliers shared generously of their memories and their opinions about their own involvement in the GFC. Members made themselves vulnerable by talking about their behaviours and values as applied to their own consumption; suppliers were vulnerable in sharing about their business practices and values. They gave a small window into the operations, the relationships, and the joys and frustrations of participating in this alternative food provisioning scheme.

Appendix 1.
Interview Guide: Member

M / F
Age:
Occupation:
Number of people in household:

1. INTERVIEW INTRODUCTION

Length: 60 – 75 minutes
Primary goal: I will be asking you questions about your membership activity with the original Good Food Club (GFC), which has now been divided into two groups – GFC-Mowbray and GFC-Rondebosch. I'll be asking these questions in order to see things the way you see them… more like a conversation with a focus on your experience, your opinions and what you think or feel about the topics covered.

2. CONSENT

Would you like to participate in this interview?

You have read, understood and signed the Informed Voluntary Consent form?

Do you have any questions?

3. HISTORY OF GFC MEMBERSHIP ACTIVITY

Tell me about when you first became a member of the GFC?

Follow-up questions, if necessary

What year was that?

How did you become aware of the GFC?

What were your main reasons for joining?

Follow-up questions, if necessary

Organic food? Specialty items? Access to a specific supplier?

What kinds of items were you most interested in buying?

Follow-up questions, if necessary

Meat? Eggs? Pantry items? … specific broad categories.

What is your household monthly food budget?

What percentage of this monthly budget do you spend through the GFC?

Are there items you wish you could buy through the GFC that you currently can't buy?

What do you think are the benefits of buying through the GFC as compared to your other provisioning spaces**?**

What are the problems of buying through the GFC as compared to your other provisioning spaces?

What changes to the way the GFC operates would be helpful to you?

Follow-up questions, if necessary

Prompts: ordering, communication, market day logistics...

4. VALUES

I'm going to question you about some of the values that might or might not motivate your involvement in the GFC.

4.1 Values regarding facilitation of direct relationship between members and suppliers

Perhaps a foundational stated value rooting all the others to follow is: *"The facilitation of direct relationships with the producers of your food."* What are your thoughts of this as a value?

Do you think this value is being achieved through your GFC membership?

Was it a motivating factor for when you joined, and is it now?

In what ways do you think facilitation of a direct relationship with your suppliers needs to be improved?

4.2 Values regarding economic benefit to members and suppliers

Do you find the prices through the GFC, in general, higher, lower or the same as your other provisioning spaces?

Would you describe the prices you pay through the GFC as fair?

Do you think the GFC suppliers you buy from are paid fairly?

Do you think you have enough information about the individual suppliers to accurately answer this question?

I'm going to read a statement to you that I'm going to ask you questions about: *"GFC members have as a value that they want to pay prices that are fair to both the producer as well as the buyer."* Is this something that you can say is a motivating factor for your GFC membership?

If it is a motivating factor for you now, can you remember if that was a factor when you first joined the GFC?

If you've had a shift in this as a motivating factor, what do you think influenced this values shift?

4.3 Values regarding economic support for small & local producers

Do you think the suppliers you buy from through the GFC would be categorized as 'small & local'?

Do you think you have enough information about the individual suppliers to accurately answer this question?

How would you define 'small'?

How would you define 'local'?

I'm going to read a statement to you that I'm going to ask you questions about: *"GFC members have as a value they want to support small, local producers."* Is this something that you can say is a motivating factor for your GFC membership?

If it is a motivating factor for you now, can you remember if that was a factor when you first joined the GFC?

If you've had a shift in this as a motivating factor, what do you think influenced this values shift?

4.4 Values about ethical business practice, especially regarding fair treatment of employees

Do you think the suppliers you buy from through the GFC exercise fair treatment of employees?

Do you think you have enough information about the individual suppliers to accurately answer this question?

I'm going to read a statement to you that I'm going to ask you questions about: *"GFC members have as a value they want to support producers with ethical business practices, especially with regard to fair treatment of employees."* Is this something that you can say is a motivating factor for your GFC membership?

If it is a motivating factor for you now, can you remember if that was a factor when you first joined the GFC?

If you've had a shift in this as a motivating factor, what do you think influenced this values shift?

Are there any other areas of 'ethical business practice' that should be considered when vetting GFC suppliers?

4.5 Values regarding production methods with regards to good treatment of animals

Do you think the suppliers you buy from through the GFC exercise good treatment of animals in their production methods?

Do you think you have enough information about the individual suppliers to accurately answer this question?

I'm going to read a statement to you that I'm going to ask you questions about: *"GFC members have as a value to support producers with good production practices regarding animals."* Is this something that you can say is a motivating factor for your GFC membership?

If it is a motivating factor for you now, can you remember if that was a factor when you first joined the GFC?

If you've had a shift in this as a motivating factor, what do you think influenced this values shift?

4.6 Values regarding production methods with regards to good treatment of environment & soil

When it comes to production methods, is 'organic' important to you?

<u>*Follow-up questions, if necessary*</u>

What do you define as 'organic'?

Thoughts on environmentally-friendly packaging?

Do you think the suppliers you buy from through the GFC exercise ethical treatment of the environment and soil in their production methods?

Do you think you have enough information about the individual suppliers to accurately answer this question?

I'm going to read a statement to you that I'm going to ask you questions about: "GFC Mowbray members have as a value that they want to buy food from producers with good production methods regarding their treatment of the environment and the soil." Is this something that you can say is a motivating factor for your GFC membership?

If it is a motivating factor for you now, can you remember if that was a factor when you first joined the GFC?

If you've had a shift in this as a motivating factor, what do you think influenced this values shift?

4.7 Values regarding social connection and trust

As a GFC member, how would you describe the levels and quality of trust you feel with the suppliers you collectively buy from?

Follow-up questions, if necessary

Can you give an example of a time when this trust was evident?

As a GFC member, how would you describe the levels and quality of trust you feel with the other members of your GFC:

Follow-up questions, if necessary

Can you give an example of a time when this trust was evident?

I'm going to read a statement to you that I'm going to ask you questions about: "GFC members have as a value that there would be social connection and trust between them and their suppliers, as well as between members themselves." Is this something that you can say is a motivating factor for your GFC membership?

If it is a motivating factor for you now, can you remember if that was a factor when you first joined the GFC?

If you've had a shift in this as a motivating factor, what do you think influenced this values shift?

4.8 Values regarding growing understanding of ethical choices

Over the span of your GFC membership, do you think you have grown in your understanding of ethical choices when it comes to buying food?

Follow-up questions, if necessary

Would you have any comment or observation to make about this growth/ or lack of growth in this understanding?

[If growth:] What contributed most to this growth?

4.9 Conclusion regarding values

Of the values we've discussed, which would you rate as the most important to you?

[direct relationship with suppliers, ethical business practice esp. re employees, ethical treatment of animals, good treatment of environment/soil, trust/connection…]

Are there any values you think are missing?

Do you have any other final thoughts on these issues?

*Note: Additional follow-up questions were asked, as appropriate.

Appendix 2.
Interview Guide: Supplier

M / F
Age:
Business name:
Producer / Intermediary:

1. INTERVIEW INTRODUCTION

Length: 60 – 75 minutes
Primary goal: I will be asking you questions about your business relationship with the original Good Food Club (GFC), which has now been divided into two groups – GFC-Mowbray and GFC-Rondebosch. I'll be asking these questions in order to see things the way you see them… more like a conversation with a focus on your experience, your opinions and what you think or feel about the topics covered.

2. CONSENT

Would you like to participate in this interview?

You have read, understood and signed the Informed Voluntary Consent form?

Do you have any questions?

3. BACKGROUND

Invite interviewee to very briefly tell about her/himself, especially as related to her/his business*:* General information about background… mostly general and short personal history, what kind of business s/he owns, and personal involvement in the business.

4. HISTORY OF GFC SUPPLY

Tell me about when you first began supplying the GFC?

Follow-up questions, if necessary

What year was that?

How did you come into contact with each other?

What items did you supply to the GFC?

Have there been changes the items you supply to the GFC from then until now? If so, what changes?

Follow-up questions, if necessary

What reason/s for the change/s?

What would an average amount of a monthly invoice be now?

Has there been a shift or have there been shifts in the volume of order from when you started to the present?

Are there items you produce which the GFC doesn't buy? If so, why?

If this pie chart represents your customers in terms of total Rand amounts in a year, how would the pie chart be divided in terms of the following customer categories:

GFC-original [Mowbray and Rondebosch]

Other GFCs

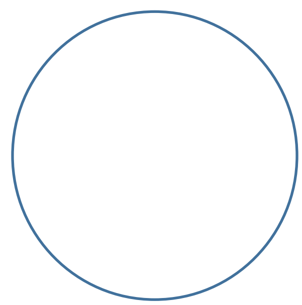
Formal retailers [list]

Wholesale distributors [list]

Markets [list]

Informal [list]

Others [list]



What do you think are the benefits of supplying GFC as compared with your other customers?

What are the problems of supplying GFC as compared with your other customers?

What changes in this business relationship would be helpful for your business?

5. VALUES

I’m going to ask you some questions about some of the values driving GFC members.

5.1 Values regarding facilitation of direct relationship between members and suppliers

Perhaps a foundational stated value rooting all the others to follow is: “The facilitation of direct relationships with the producers of your food.” Can you comment on the quality of your connection with GFC-Mowbray and GFC-Rondebosch?

<u>Follow-up questions, if necessary</u>

Is it different than with other customers?

Are there ways in which this relationship is needs improvement?

5.2 Values regarding economic benefit to members and suppliers

GFC members have as a value that they want to pay prices that are fair to both the producer as well as the buyer. Would you describe the prices GFC pays as fair?

<u>Follow-up questions, if necessary</u>

Does GFC pay higher/lower/same prices as other customers?

Would you describe your business from GFC as economically beneficial?

Follow-up questions, if necessary

Describe specific benefits?

In comparison to your other customers listed above?

5.3 Values regarding economic support for small & local producers

GFC members have as a value the economic support for small and local producers. Can you comment on this as pertains to your business?

5.4 Values about ethical business practice, especially regarding fair treatment of employees

GFC members have as a value they want to support producers who have fair treatment of employees. In order to answer this, can you tell me how many employees you have:

	Casual	Seasonal	Formal
Part-time			
Full-time			

What factors do you think must be considered when it comes to treating employees fairly?

Follow-up questions, if necessary

If haven't come through the answer, introduce the following: permanence, wages rate, contracts, working conditions, breaks, farm labour housing.

What is your understanding of _________? [for each answer given to previous question]

Minimum wages for employees is R18- R20 [18 farmworkers, 20 other kinds of work other than domestic work]. Are you able to pay every employee at this minimum rate?

5.5 Values regarding production methods with regard to good treatment of animals

GFC members have as a value the good treatment of animals. What animals do you farm [or are supplied by farms to you] in order to sell your goods to the GFC?

Can you tell me about your [or your suppliers'] farm practices with regard to your animals?

Are there any farming standards or protocols that inform your [or their] practice? If so, which ones.

If not, do you know of any protocols?

With the understanding that farming has many complexities, what are the barriers that keep you from farming [or being supplied by farms adhering] to the ideal standards we've discussed here?

5.6 Values regarding production methods with regard to good treatment of environment & soil

GFC members have as a value that they want to buy food from producers with good practice regarding their treatment of the environment and the soil. Can you tell me about your farming practices [or farming practices of those who supply you] in these regards?

Are there farming standards or protocols that inform your [or their] practice? If so, which.

If not, do you know of any protocols?

Do you [or they] have any organic certification/s?

Packaging is also a particular concern with regard to the environmental impact. What are the challenges of packaging the goods you supply?

Do you have plans or strategies to improve your packaging?

With the understanding that the supply of goods has many complexities, what are the barriers that keep you from adhering to the ideal standards we've discussed here?

5.7 Values regarding social connection and trust

GFC members have as a value that there would be social connection and trust between them and their suppliers. As a GFC supplier, how would you describe the levels and quality of trust you feel with the GFC you supply?

Follow-up questions, if necessary

Can you give one or more examples of a time when this trust was evident in your business dealings with the GFC?

Question re payment and trust?

5.8 Values regarding growing understanding of ethical choices

GFC members have as a value that they would grow in their understanding of making ethical food choices. Would you have any comment or observation to make about their growth or lack of growth in this understanding?

5.7 Conclusion regarding values

Is it a surprise to you that any of these are stated GFC values that they want to support? If so, which ones?

Follow-up questions, if necessary

What are the behavior/operating inconsistencies you've observed or experienced?

Are there any values you think are missing?

*Note: Additional follow-up questions were asked, as appropriate, with each participant.

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