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From food consumers to food citizens: reconceptualising environmentally-conscious food decision-making, in Gilson, E., Kenehan, S. (eds.) *Food, environment, and climate change: justice at the intersections*, 2018, Rowman & Littlefield International, pp. 267-280

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From Food Consumers to Food Citizens: Reconceptualising Environmentally-Conscious Food Decision-Making

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For *Food Justice, the Environment, and Climate Change*, edited by Erinn Gilson and Sarah Kenehan, Routledge (forthcoming, 2019), accepted 2 July 2018

Biography

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Keywords

Consumerism, Food Choice, Food Miles, Local Food, Green, Food Citizens

Introduction

In recent years, there has been increased popular attention to making ethical food choices (for a summary on key issues in food ethics, see Ankeny 2012) and scrutiny of the various ways in which people make such choices. A key focus has been ethical consumerism, for instance choosing to avoid or boycott certain products or types of products, or actively seeking out

various products that align with our preferred values. For example, buying local to create economic benefits for those within our own communities or favouring humanely-produced foodstuffs because of concerns about animal welfare, to provide just a few examples, are often claimed to be markers of ethical food decision-making. However, there has been relatively less focus among food studies scholars and consumers alike on the complexities associated with food choices related to reducing environmental effects or seeking to stem climate change, despite the fact that food seems to be a domain in which we can actually have impacts, given that we have numerous options for food choice and make them on a daily basis.

This chapter explores the practical and conceptual difficulties faced by those who wish to make what they view as environmentally-conscious food choices, as well as those who wish to encourage consideration of such issues. First, I discuss the complexities associated with the usual proxy measures utilised to make environmentally-conscious food choices, including food miles and local and green foods. Deeper conceptual impediments to promoting such food choices also are outlined, drawing on scholarship from environmental ethics and science and technology studies. Although focusing on ethical choices may be an effective and compelling strategy with regard to decisions where specific types of humans or non-human animals are directly affected (say farmers and producers in one's own community by decisions to buy locally, or non-human animals by choices that favour more humane production methods), it is much more difficult to use ethical consumerism to motivate environmentally-conscious food decisions for both pragmatic and conceptual reasons.

I then argue that the dominance of ethical consumerism as the frame within which food choices are conceptualised has created tensions in association with making environmentally-conscious food choices. The typical emphasis on "voting with your fork" reinforces neoliberal tendencies to view ethical decisions as a matter of individual choice as

evidenced by market trends that somehow will lead to beneficial changes in the broader food system. Thus efforts and initiatives that harness people's roles as food citizens are more likely to be effective with regard to climate change for several reasons: first, the idea of a food citizen forces people to consider the collective good and shared values when making food decisions, including with regard to the environment. Second, food citizenship avoids the classic ethical conundrums about difficulties associated with duties to distant others by clearly focusing attention simultaneously on the local and the broader environment. Finally, the collective causal effects of broader policy decisions made or supported by us as food citizens are more clearly connected to environmental impacts (and potentially easier to quantify and evaluate) than individual market-based decisions.

Why Our Usual Concepts Are Not Useful

This section explores a series of key product categories often equated with or utilised as proxies for reduction of environmental impacts of food choices, including food miles, local, and green products. It should be noted at the start that many people attempting to make ethical food choices rely heavily on labelling, despite the well-recognised limitations of such systems, particularly given that most associated with environmental impacts are not formally regulated. Hence as will be argued, these sort of proxy terms, including "food miles," "local," and "green" have a problematic status for those trying to make environmentally-friendly food choices.

A common approach used by many people to make what they consider to be environmentally-conscious food choices is to select those products that have travelled fewer "food miles." The term "food miles" originated in the 1990s, and is attributed to the UK academic Tim Lang. It typically refers to the distance that food is transported from the time of its production until it reaches the consumer. As one scholar writes, "the 'food miles'

concept has arguably captured the public imagination more than any other term when it comes to debates about sustainable consumption...largely a result of the apparent simplicity of its application” (Maye 2011, 158). Many contend that there have been considerable increases in recent years in the number of miles travelled by food products because of rapidly increasing global trade, changes in food supply chain patterns (such as consolidation of packaging and supply depots especially in larger supermarket chains), and the increase of non-locally produced processed and packaged foods (for an example of a calculation of additional environmental costs hidden in the average UK food basket, see Pretty et al. 2005). However as will be discussed, practical applications of this concept are far from simple, and attempts to devise formulae or algorithms to calculate food miles as well as measure their actual environmental effects have been plagued with difficulties.

Following its introduction, the concept of “food miles” subsequently was expanded in scholarly literature (e.g., Paxton 2011) to include any ecological impacts created by all processes associated with the product not only during production, but also including storage, delivery, purchase, and so on. Thus the expanded definition includes everything from miles travelled by consumers to reach to the grocery store to the energy expended to prepare food for long-distance transport and extended shelf life. Therefore it has been noted that even in its early incarnations, the food miles concept as used in scholarship included attention to environmental justice issues in parallel to what we now would term “lifecycle analyses” (Coffman 2012). In contrast, more popular literature tends to rely on a simplified notion related to primarily to travel distance of the product for it to reach the consumer, and uses a set distance, such as the “100-mile diet” (Smith and Mackinnon 2007).

Although it is clearly the case that use of the food miles concept has made it much more obvious how complex and often inefficient our food system is, and hence can be used as the general basis of campaigns for more sustainable agricultural practices and systems of

food supply, food miles also have come to be used as a measure of environmental impact, and particularly of carbon footprint and contribution to global warming. Major supermarket chains such as Tesco in the United Kingdom have attempted to use labels to indicate food miles travelled or carbon footprint equivalencies, but these schemes have had difficulties due to lack of standardised measurement systems and problems with breaking down the components of processed foods. Thus many remain concerned that use of food miles as a metric is problematic and continues to be prone to oversimplification when applied, and particularly when utilised in a consumer context (Van Passel 2010).

In addition, although food miles provide an intuitive shorthand, empirical research on the concept often has produced unexpected results: for instance, as a study in New Zealand showed, food produced in more energy-efficient or temperate settings and then transported used less energy on average than food produced in hothouses (Saunders, Barber, & Taylor 2006). Other studies have shown that distance alone is not an adequate criterion for gauging the sustainability of food products (Schmitt et al. 2017). Finally, a study (Coley, Howard, & Winter 2011) of two contrasting food distribution systems in the United Kingdom compared the carbon emissions that resulted from a large-scale vegetable box scheme to those resulting from customers travelling to a local farm shop: if a shopper drives a more than 6.7 kilometers round-trip to purchase organic vegetables, their carbon emissions are likely to be greater than the emissions from the vegetable box scheme, even though it involves cold storage, packing, transport to a regional hub, and transport to the customer's doorstep. Thus mode of transport and type of system matters as much or more than distance itself.

Parallel to the rise of the food miles concept, choosing to buy local foods has gained in popularity for a variety of reasons which range from supporting the local economy and the desire to build relationships with local producers or retailers based on understanding and trust, to buying what is freshest or cheaper. Eating local also is often used as a way to reduce

food miles and decrease negative environmental impacts: however, many studies have shown that the equation of these two concepts is not valid (for a general discussion, see Born & Purcell 2006). For instance, research in the US (Weber & Matthews 2008) revealed that the bulk of emissions associated with food occur during the production phase (83%) rather than transportation (11%, of which delivery from producer to retailer contributed only 4%) of the average U.S. household's carbon footprint associated with food consumption. Others have noted that always buying locally can result in adverse effects, for instance due to increased needs to store food to sell in the off-season to meet demand (Smith et al. 2005), or inefficient growth in hothouses (Garnett 2000).

More generally, local foods might be not in fact be locally produced as the definition of "local" differs radically depending on context, experience, and location: for instance, many participants in our qualitative research in Australia comment to us that something produced within the country should count as local, likely in part because of the extremely long distances between major cities and some agricultural locales. Even if a product is labelled and marketed as local, it may be composed of ingredients that have travelled long distances, if it is processed or produced locally. In summary, equating the category of local food to that of reduced food miles has been argued to inappropriately underemphasise other values and meanings associated with the concept of "local" and people's decisions to eat locally, particularly their desires to reintegrate food production and consumption within the context of place (Schnell 2013). Thus as Claire C. Hinrichs (2000) puts it, focus on the local might well result in "a conflation of spatial relations for social ones" (301), creating romanticised and elitist illusions of connectedness rather than real, sustainable communities.

Furthermore, the validity of rationale associated with eating "local" needs to be carefully assessed within the particular context of particular consumption decisions: for instance Gwendolyn Blue (2009) notes that the turn towards local eating has been embedded

in the strong resurgence of neoliberal forms of governance and helps to reinforce these problematic institutions, a point to which we will return. What is critical is that context clearly matters, and any equation of buying local and seeking to have positive environmental impacts is extremely fragile and may well be more associated with broader trends to use consumerist models to displace responsibilities away from governments and onto individuals as purchasers.

Finally, being a “locavore” has become a sort of identity claim for those seeking to be ethical food consumers, particularly in today’s “foodie” culture (Johnston and Baumann 2009). Thus the term may well be used more as a social or status signifier than as an indicator of the underlying values associated with “eating local,” particularly given the variable definitions of the term “local” as well as the diverse motivations to pursue it, as is the case with many of the other labels and behaviours associated with key categories related to ethical consumption. As seen in our qualitative research, even those who try generally to eat “locally” make exceptions for a variety of reasons, including taste preferences, convenience, price, and occasion: for instance, some report buying local (and perhaps organic, free-range, and so on) when having people over for dinner or for what they view as products that are more important to buy locally, such as fresh fruit and vegetables. In addition, identity claims in this domain are only available to those who can make decisions to purchase (or avoid) certain sorts of products, and hence they again prioritise consumerist approaches, in contrast to a more democratic approach such as food citizenship, to be discussed below.

Another category of products commonly associated with buying decisions intended to have a positive impact (or at least to reduce negative impacts) on the environment are “green” foods. Many sceptics note that the green category is not well-defined legally, and few regulations or even voluntary certification schemes exist for labelling in most locales (as compared for example to organic labelling); hence there is an increasing amount of

“greenwashing” of products particularly through labelling claims with little evidence of their environmental impacts (Littler 2009a, b). Organic foods also sometimes are favoured by some because they are thought to have fewer determinantal environmental effects than more conventional agricultural methods, but also in our research, organics are thought to be of high quality and have higher nutritional value (particularly for children) by those who tend to purchase them, hence underscoring the complexities of associated with environmentally positive food choices. Yet others argue that dietary shifts can be a more effective means of lowering an average household’s food-related climate footprint than “buying local” or other shorthand formulae. For instance, one study (Weber and Matthews 2008) showed that changing from red meat and dairy products to chicken, fish, eggs, or a vegetable-based diet, for less than one day per week’s worth of calories achieves more greenhouse gas reduction than buying all locally sourced food.

Finally, and perhaps not surprisingly given all of these complexities, empirical research reveals that consumers are not particularly motivated to avoid (or buy) products because of their potential impacts on the environment: for instance in the UK, preference surveys indicated that 21.5% of people would avoid buying New Zealand products because of “food miles” or the “long distance it travels,” whereas in revealed preference surveys in supermarkets, only 3.6% indicated that they had consciously chosen British products because such produce was “less harmful for the environment” (Kemp et al. 2010, 504). Our qualitative research in Australia echoes this result, with few participants who buy local indicating that they do so because of environmental effects, and “food miles” generally not being raised as an ethical issue associated with food choice or a consideration when purchasing decisions are made.

Conceptual Issues Associated with Environmentally-Conscious Food Choices

Based on the practical difficulties associated with using food choices as noted above, perhaps it is not surprising that many consumers in fact do not tend to use their purchasing and consumption decisions as ways to limit effects on the environment. However, as this section shows, there are several key deeper issues that also can be argued to interfere with people's abilities to use food choices in this way.

First, drawing on claims previously put forward by Alastair Iles (2005), food miles potentially could be viewed as being used as a way to bridge gaps created by things that are not materially present and to attempt to create discourses in what otherwise would be empty spaces. However as Iles claims, there are few ways in which lay people are supported in any efforts to calculate food miles or similar, given the complexities associated with developing these metrics. Interestingly, a study of labelling in terms of "food miles" (Caputo et al. 2013) supports the idea that this category has become a proxy for something else beyond (or different from) environmental impact, inasmuch as consumers preferred labels in terms of time and number of kilometres travelled, rather than carbon dioxide emissions. The preference for time and distance travelled might well indicate that these consumers are buying local to support their local economy or express connection to their local community, rather than for environmentally related reasons.

However most importantly, drawing on Iles (2005, after Banach et al. 2002), I contend that food miles are lacking in meaning, as they in fact represent a (failed) attempt to create a type of "missing object"). "Missing objects" are any form of representations, practices, or artefacts that in some sense "stand in" for something that cannot be easily or directly experienced or envisioned. Therefore these sorts of representations permit people to consider or speak about various issues to which they previously had limited or no access, and little or no direct experience, so long as interpretive conventions, shared standards of proof, preferred evidential forms, and criteria to collectively determine what the missing objects

mean are developed.¹ On the positive side, if successful, such terms or representations can allow people to engage socially, conceptually, and otherwise, and consider potentials for change. They can serve as a sort of translation mechanism, particularly to allow information or knowledge that previously was only held by experts to be accessed by lay actors: think for instance of use of a graph or chart summarising a complex scientific phenomenon (an apt example, as the original concept comes out of science education scholarship). However on the negative side, some missing objects can appear to fill a gap without actually allowing access to or development of the underlying concepts and values which they help to bridge, and thus cannot be used as the basis of persuasive arguments. I argue that more generally, a range of proxy categories that might be thought to be useful ways to reduce environmental impact such as “local” and “green,” together with “food miles,” are ineffectual missing objects at least in their current forms (Iles [2005] has a series of positive suggestions about what might need to occur to make “food miles” more effective). Thus the concept and terminology fail to motivate people to scrutinise their purchasing and consumption patterns, or to seek change from producers, retailers, and policymakers. Thus, in a sense, the rhetorical power of these sorts of ethical food categories has the opposite effect of what might be intended: in their plasticity (and particularly as they have come to be used as unregulated categories in marketing and retailing), they have come to lose power and hence undermine the very values which they might be seen as furthering.

An additional issue relating to making environmentally-conscious choices is that many people have difficulties translating their desires to be environmentally-friendly into

¹ Thus there are some similarities between the notion of “missing objects” as used here and Susan Leigh Star and Jim Griesemer’s 1989 idea of “boundary objects” (objects that are plastic enough to be used by different communities in different ways, but also are robust in their identities to allow coherence across different social worlds), inasmuch as both serve as translation mechanisms, at least when the missing objects are effective. However, I have used “missing objects” here because of the explicit nature of the use of the objects as stand ins or proxies in this domain, and because there is the potential for a representation not to work in the case of missing objects, whereas boundary objects assume effective translation is occurring.

specific types of food behaviours because of the lack of a concrete “moral other” directly affected by individual choices. It is clear that other types of food choices in part or whole hinge on the effects that they have on identifiable moral others, such as humans (say the economic benefits to local farmers by decisions to buy locally) or non-human animals (by choices that favour more humane production methods). However as has been noted in a variety of contexts within environmental ethics, the preservation of collective entities such as species, ecosystems, populations, and so on is a major concern for many environmentalists, even though these entities are not sentient or otherwise subjects-of-a life in the usual moral sense (for a discussion of these issues within environmental ethics more generally, see Brennan and Lo 2016). Making “environmentally conscious” food choices when the “environment” is difficult to define or envision thus is unsurprisingly problematic for many.

In addition, as has been more generally noted with reference to climate change, motivating people to act presents deep practical problems in part due to the dispersed nature of greenhouse gas emissions, together with the fact that those who are responsible for these emissions are uncoordinated and largely unregulated. Furthermore as argued by the philosopher Stephen Gardiner (2006; cf. his 2011), current generations do not have strong incentives to act, as future generations will carry the brunt of the impacts of climate change. In addition, some scholars have argued that the term “sustainability” has come to mean very different things and carries with it different symbolic meanings for different groups, reflecting very different interests (e.g., Redclift 2004), ranging from a biologically-based concept to an economic or social understanding of what it means to be sustainable. Similar to what was argued above with reference to “local” and other terms associated with ethical consumption, this sort of ambiguity again results in the creation of a failed missing object, one which is signalled by the term (in this case “sustainability”) but the basis of which is

weak and unconvincing, given that metrics and evidence for it are hotly debated and relatively inaccessible, particularly for lay persons.

From Food Consumerism to Citizenship?

It has become extremely popular to focus on ways in which our food choices can make a difference, such as through socially-responsible purchasing and preferential consumerism (sometimes called ‘buycotts’) or boycotts (e.g., Stolle, Hooghe, & Micheletti 2005; Blue 2010). According to this approach, the typical emphasis on “voting with your fork,” that is, using purchasing as a way to express values encourages choices that in turn will be reflected in market patterns that somehow will lead to beneficial changes in the broader food system: if we buy (or avoid) certain products, it will send a signal to those producing them about the changes that we wish to see happen. Some scholars even use “political consumerism” as a term to indicate that people’s purchasing preferences can have political effects (e.g., Micheletti 2003; Tavernier 2012).

However as numerous critics have argued, ethical consumption more generally can be seen as reinforcing neoliberal tendencies by transferring responsibilities to individuals as consumers and focusing attention away from collective action and acknowledgment of governmental responsibility for meeting social needs, especially with regard to fundamental needs (such as food and water) and broader crises that require larger scale action (such as climate change) (Clarke et al. 2007; Blue 2009; Littler 2009a). Focusing on individual choice, and thus on individuals as the locus for action, allows us to ignore structural inequalities and consumption practices in the modern food system (e.g., see Guthman 2008). In addition, emphasising “ethical consumerism” is highly problematic because it relies on an illusory set of shared values or beliefs, particularly given the multiplicity of ways in which many of the key categories are interpreted, as discussed above. Consumerism also is not open to all, and

disenfranchise those in lower socioeconomic groups, which often are correlated with other more marginalized demographic groups.

Thus I contend that efforts and initiatives which harness people's roles as food citizens are more likely to be effective with regard to climate change, as will be argued below: first, the idea of a food citizen forces people to consider the collective good and shared values when making food decisions, including with regard to the environment. It allows more involvement of diverse actors who might otherwise be excluded by a more consumer-based approach. Second, food citizenship avoids the classic ethical conundrums about difficulties associated with duties to the environment or to a vague larger whole by clearly focusing attention simultaneously on the local, the broader, and even the global environment. Third, the collective causal effects of broader policy decisions made or supported by us as food citizens are more clearly connected to environmental impacts (and potentially easier to quantify and evaluate) than individual market-based decisions. As has been argued with reference to the need to shift from viewing people as "green consumers" to considering them as "green citizens," such a move reinforces a more holistic and broader approach to consumption and environmentally-related issues (e.g., Prothero, McDonagh, & Dobscha 2010). Finally, drawing on arguments by Neva Hassanein (2003 with reference to food democracy and sustainability, food citizenship is necessary, because having more positive effects on the environment does not merely involve scientific approaches, but also fundamentally requires resolution of our value conflicts.

What is food citizenship? Jennifer L. Wilkins (2005) defines food citizenship as "the practice of engaging in food-related behaviors that support, rather than threaten, the development of a democratic, socially and economically just, and environmentally sustainable food system" (269). Thus everyone has (or should have) an interest in creating conditions which allow and foster the development and maintenance of democratic and

socially and economically just food systems (see Wilkins 2005 for related discussions), which may well cross traditional boundaries of cities, states or provinces, and nations, and not align directly with being a formal “citizen.” Of course, the difficulties associated with acting as a responsible food citizen lie in the details about what counts as just, what other factors should be included in our ideal system (and in particular how we incorporate environmental sustainability), and how we measure such outcomes and weight them in relation to other desired outcomes.

It is critical to note that consumer and citizen discourses often are incommensurable (Sagoff 1988), as consumerist discourse typically narrows the conversation to those matters which directly affect individuals as evidenced through their purchasing decisions, attributing to them relatively passive roles (Welsh & McRae 1998). In contrast, a discourse rooted in concepts of democracy and citizenship views the public as entitled (and even obligated) to participate in discussions about common purposes and the greater good with regard to food. Although the literature on food citizenship has burgeoned in recent years (e.g., Welsh & McRae 1998; Lang 1999 to highlight a few early contributions), most scholars focus on how to reform what some have termed the “capitalist system of production, distribution, consumption, and commercialization” (Siniscalchi & Counihan 2014, 6), and thus tie food citizenship to local food plans, farmers’ markets, community gardens, and so on (but cf. Carruthers Den Hoed 2016 that links hunting to food citizenship). This literature often fails to engage with the larger domains in which food citizenship can have effects, well beyond even the corporate food system and traditional agriculture.

The broader idea of a “food citizen” requires people to consider what our collective good is: in this way it permits more focus on shared values, in concert with needing to consider how to create a society that allows all to pursue a good life (Soper 2004). This

approach allows us to avoid the consumerist model, where many ways of expressing ethical values via food purchasing and choices are not open to everyone, and particularly not socially and economically marginalised groups. In these models, those with the financial or social capital to buy supposedly “ethical” products which will have positive effects on the environment (or reduce negative effects) are the only ones positioned to act, particularly given the relatively high cost of products associated with these values (e.g., green and organic products) and the fact that the practices associated with such purchases (such as patronising farmers’ markets to buy local foodstuffs) typically require time not always available to those in lower socioeconomic and other marginalised groups.

A second advantage to stressing food citizenship as a cornerstone of environmental consciousness is that it avoids the classic ethical conundrums about difficulties associated with duties to the environment or to a vague larger whole by clearly focusing attention simultaneously on the local, the broader, and even the global environment. Participating in policy, regulatory, and related decisions as food citizens may well be most effective at the local level, but these types of activities can contribute to broader policy and regulation say at a regional or national level. Hence the line between actions and outcomes is more defined, causally clearer, and thus likely to be more motivating. In turn, the causal effects of broader policy decisions made or supported by us as food citizens participating in a collective can be more clearly connected to environmental impacts (and potentially easier to quantify and evaluate) than individual market-based decisions relying on vague and plastic categories such as “food miles” or “local.” Consider for instance policy-based efforts to limit food waste or to eliminate plastic grocery bags, which have clear targets and can result in measurable outcomes about which a community can assess and modify behaviours as needed on an ongoing basis.

Because the uncertainties associated with how we can act with regard to food in ways that will benefit (and not further endanger) the environment require considerable exploration and debate, the key aim of those who wish to foster more public engagement with environmentally-responsible choices and consumption (of food and otherwise) should be to encourage the exchange of not just of opinions or the gathering of purchasing preferences, but to prioritise discussion about arguments and reasons associated with the values that people hold about these issues. As previously argued (Ankeny 2016), such approaches are likely to be best supported by a deliberative system for food policy that seeks to articulate evidence, values, and trade-offs; that fosters participation in decision-making; and that thus generates food policy that is legitimate. As detailed in the deliberative democracy literature (see review in Ankeny 2016) but also with explored with regard to food and sustainability (e.g., Hassanein 2008), ongoing discussion and deliberation allows citizens to clarify issues and values, and thus make better decisions for themselves and others. To have a strong democracy, we must recognise and promote the public good, beyond our individual interests, and deliberative engagement promotes these types of values. In turn if policy is grounded in deliberation, consensus, and compromise aligned with the broader goal of fostering good for the whole, those policies are much more legitimate but also more likely to be effective.

Finally, fostering food citizenship is simply necessary because questions about environmental impact, and how we can have less adverse impacts as a result of our food-related activities, is not simply a scientific question but one which is undergirded by conflicts in values which require relations. We need to consider how we want to define key concepts including “sustainability” in social and political terms and be open to the fact that our collective understanding of such concepts will evolve over time (see Hassanein 2003). Thus as we all have a stake in these problems, we also must all make contributions to devising solutions.

Of course there are clear obstacles to thinking and acting as a food citizen: many would point to large-scale problems in the food system as it currently stands (e.g., O’Kane 2016) particularly its corporate structures; problems accessing accurate information about food; and the limitations imposed by current food policies that may well be difficult to overcome, especially given some of the inherent conflicts between an industry seeking to make a profit and societal norms relating to human and environmental health. There also are a range of pragmatic issues relating to limits on people’s capacities to engage as food citizens: for example, scholars have found that action is most likely where people are at lifestyles that allow them the time and energy to participate (e.g., Kriflik 2006). However I contend that increasing engagement by people in food-related policymaking—be they eaters, farmers, or even those involved in the food industry—is likely to lead to reflection that should help to create change over time that will improve our environment but also our democratic society.

Conclusion

In sum, even if it is clear that many of us share the goal of being more ethically conscious about our food choices, and particularly with regard to effects on the environment, our shorthand approaches of using concepts and categories such as food miles or local have been failing us in multiple ways. Rethinking our strategies by turning away from consumerism and the reigning neoliberal emphasis on individual decision-making, and instead encouraging participation by all as food citizens is likely to be more productive and effective.

Furthermore, reflecting on our underlying values associated food choices and their impacts will allow us to pursue even deeper goals such as ensuring food security, including equal access to nourishing, culturally appropriate, sustainable, secure, and safe food, in part by forcing us to engage with and interrogate the existing food system including our dominant

production and consumption methods (Heldke 2009). Such approaches can allow us or even force us to question our choices and how we make them, to cultivate more popular awareness of alternatives without relying on vacuous terms co-opted by industry or other interest groups, and to examine our moral relationships with others, including with the environment. We need a food system that is governed by food citizens that are reflective and active in inclusive and democratic decision-making processes, and that in turn allow us to consider the environmental implications of our choices and actions.

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Acknowledgments

Research contributing to this publication was funded by the Australian Research Council Discovery Projects Scheme (DP110105062, “What Shall We Have for Tea? Toward a New Discourse of Food Ethics in Contemporary Australia”). I am also grateful to our research participants, Ms Liza Huston for administrative support throughout the project, Dr Heather Bray for her collaboration on the research, and the editors of this book for their helpful feedback on an earlier version of the chapter.