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**TOWARDS VISCERAL ENTANGLEMENTS: KNOWING AND
GROWING ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHIES OF FOOD**

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*Is it worth the waiting for?
If we live 'til eighty four
All we ever get is gruel!
Ev'ry day we say our prayer --
Will they change the bill of fare?
Still we get the same old gruel!
There is not a crust, not a crumb can we find,
Can we beg, can we borrow, or cadge,
But there's nothing to stop us from getting a thrill
When we all close our eyes and imagine...*

*Food, glorious food!
What wouldn't we give for
That extra bit more --
That's all that we live for
Why should we be fated to
Do nothing but brood
On food,
Magical food,
Wonderful food,
Marvellous food,
Fabulous food*

As I sit down to write this chapter, I have just finished my breakfast: two cups of organic Fair Trade coffee and a bowl of organic cereal sprinkled with blueberries (of course, *also* organic *and* a good source of anti-oxidants!). Letting my mind wander and my stomach do its thing, I decide that, instead of immediately starting to work, I would first troll the day's morning news on the Web. I quickly spot the following rather troubling headline: 'Profiteers Squeeze Billions Out of Growing Global Food Crisis' (Lean, 2008). Continuing on, I come upon a related yet even more troubling headline: 'Let them eat dirt: Multinationals reap benefits of commodity crisis' (Silverstein, 2008). My attention fully grabbed, I stop for a quick read:

The soaring price of [food] commodities worldwide has been a disaster for the poor, with reports coming out of Haiti that some people don't have enough money to pay for food and are reduced to eating dirt. But these are happy times for multinational food and grain giants. Patricia Woertz, chairman and CEO of Archer Daniel Midlands (ADM), "the world leader in bio-energy," said last month that "Volatility in commodity markets presented unprecedented opportunities. Once again, our team leveraged our financial flexibility and global asset base to capture those opportunities to deliver shareholder value." Meanwhile, Cargill profits were [up] 86% last quarter. Greg Page, Cargill chairman and CEO, has said: "Prices are setting new highs and markets are extraordinarily volatile. In this environment, Cargill's team has done an exceptional job measuring and assessing price risk, and managing the large volume of grains, oilseeds and other commodities moving through our supply chains for customers globally."

Food, glorious, food indeed—for some at least. So, while in the midst of what might be called the growing global food 'crisis'¹, I tank up on 'quality' Fair Trade and organic foods and various food multinationals tank up on profits. Yet, others, as the opening lines suggest, are forced to close their eyes and *imagine* eating—or, apparently if lucky, eat dirt—and join one of the protests over food prices sweeping much of the Global South. And, while relatively quiet as of yet, food prices are, as one report puts it, 'rocketing' in much of the Global North—Europe in particular—to cause a so-called 'bombshell in the shopping basket' (Blair, 2008).

¹ In rather simplistic terms, this contemporary 'crisis'—unlike those food 'crises' in the past which were crises of food production (i.e. too little) resulting in the round in the Green Revolution—is one generated by the unequal geographies of food *consumption*, and particularly the new Northern demands of 'environmentally friendly' bio-fuels and grains to the expanding middle-classes of India and China. Clearly, the rise in oil prices (currently \$130 a barrel) are also to blame. For more, see the excellent *End of Food* (Robbins, 2008).

What this opening points to, among other things, is the important and almost inescapable need to understand the contemporary global and daily shifting *economic geographies of food*, and, in particular, their *inequalities*. But very much more than just the usual buffet of concerns that inhabit economic geography and more mainstream economics, I want to submit that food is different from other commodities and ‘resources’ (cf. Bridge, this volume; Bakker and Bridge, 2006) and thus needs to be considered differently. Think here across the following three points by way of an argument for this case.

First, ask yourself a question: when was the last time you went without eating at least *something* during the day? Indeed, if you are living in a well-off region of the world as I am (United Kingdom), you probably ate *too much* based on the recommended daily intake of calories as stated by groups like the Food and Agricultural Organisation. The point here is that, similar to perhaps water (e.g. Bakker, 2007), but different from other commodities (e.g. clothing, cars, houses, etc), food—in one form or another—is a biological imperative that is non-substitutable for human existence as we know it. For me, this is central to food’s ‘difference’.

Second, not only is food key to material and physical reproduction, it is also key to the production and reproduction of cultures, societies, and people’s identities. Indeed, in an effort to ‘fit in’ as a transplant in the UK, I have now officially adopted beans on (buttered) toast as one of my breakfast staples, something quite unimaginable to the typical American. In a way then, food is central to the making of culture(s) and, as in mine, many food cultures are quite hybrid these days thanks to globalisation. But food’s difference is not contained only in the ordinary food ‘events’ such as one’s daily breakfast; rather, the cultural and highly social character of food often scales up to the extra-ordinary events of, for example, holiday meals and the particularly specific family food traditions that go along with these. Moreover, food is invested with all sorts of meanings, from those of particular memories (e.g. that special dish made each Christmas), to emotion, care and responsibility (e.g. Kneafsey et al, 2008; Probyn, 2000, Valentine, 1999). For me, ‘bringing home the bacon’ (sometimes literally) for my family is deeply imbued with relations of responsibility and care as it is tied directly to my ‘performance’ as a university lecturer, which, to spiral out even further, is directly tethered to the shifting economic geographies of my institution and UK higher education. Further, even the micro-scale act of cooking the evening meal, preparing that ‘special’ dish for someone—or bringing food in so that *no one* has to cook—can comprise an act of care, laden with the emotions of love and conviviality. Clearly, negative feelings surrounding food abound as well, from the quotidian nature of the ‘guilty pleasure’ of eating chocolate to the anorexic’s crushing guilt of eating anything at all. In short, food is ‘entangled’ (Lee, 2006) literally, figuratively and most intimately in and through the ways in which we make ourselves, our societies *and* our economic geographies.

Third, as Friedberg (2003b) so astutely has it, food is now more than ever sold with a story. Thus, a new and performing ‘knowledge economy’ has sprung up attached to commodities like organic and Fair Trade foods telling tales of where and how they have been produced. But for many foods, it is much more than just the simple provisioning of the geographic origins of an item or ingredient.² Indeed, the terribly geographic concept of ‘place’ is now very much the provenance of organic but also other, so-called ‘quality’ foods (Goodman, 2003; Goodman and Goodman, 2008; Harvey et al, 2004). The Pipers “Sea Salt and Somerset

² And it has been this way for a while with Food place: terrior, parmesan, etc

Cider Vinegar” Crisps I bought at my local farmshop are “Made by Farmers” but also, as the back of the (empty) bag states (see Figure 1), “...made in Lincolnshire”:

We only use the best and freshest potatoes. They are washed, sliced, and cooked in sunflower oil to bring you a delicious, crunchy hand produced crisp...At Pipers Crisps, we go to great lengths to find small, individual suppliers who make an exceptional product. Our Cider Vinegar is made by Burrow Hill Cider in Somerset. The Cider is pressed from traditional cider apples, over 40 varieties are grown in some 150 acres of orchards. Selected apples are pressed and fermented in oak vats to mature. The result is a superior vintage quality cider.

Yet, this is only half of the story of how foods are now being sold in relation to food ‘place’ (Feagan, 2007; Morgan et al, 2006). In these new economic geographies of quality foods, it is not just the story of where and how foods are produced, but also the very ‘place’ of their purchase. The idea—through farmers’ markets, farmshops, and food delivery schemes—is to reduce the social, economic and literal *distance* between the fork and field. The goal then is that, through these provisioned knowledge regimes of food’s place and its novel places of purchase, there is the (re)embedding and (re)placement of food in the (re)connected networks of production and consumption (see Goodman, 2002; Hinrichs, 2000; Holloway and Kneafsey, 2004)³. More recently, another terribly geographical idea in that of the ‘local’ has also made itself known as concept, practice and politics in much of the food-scapes of Europe and the US, and has even transformed into policy throughout much of the EU (DeLind, 2006; DuPuis and Goodman, 2005; DuPuis et al, 2006). As David Goodman and I have argued elsewhere (Goodman and Goodman, 2007), we are entering a ‘post-organic’ era where new markets have opened up around the spatial distinction of various foods as distinctly local in production and provenance.

Thus, with respect to quality foods, the staid concern of economic geographers with the innovation of firms (cites?) might instead be said to be shifting to the novel innovation of *farms*, as many farmers have gone ‘eco-entrepreneurial’ (Marsden and Smith, 2005) in form and outlook through the development of these local and regional ‘short food supply chains’ (Renting et al, 2003). At the same time, this *specific* focus on the ‘firm’—one of the central analytical figures of the sub-discipline—takes on a novel twist to be re-imagined as the double act of ‘terra firma’ and ‘corpora firma’ with quality foods as the embedded mediator between the two. This (re)connection of food consumption to its production—theoretically in academic work (e.g. Goodman, 2002) and practically in novel provisioning economies and geographies (e.g. Kirwan, 2006; Johnston and Baker, 2005)—and the politics evinced by these (re)connections (e.g. Allen, 2004; Guthman, 2004, 2007a, b), has been a key element in the broad range of work on *alternative food networks* (Goodman and Goodman, 2008). All of this points to the important and, I would argue, unique ways that food—in the particular form of alternative food networks—is *unevenly* remaking and rescaling economic geographies through the *specific* processes of this performativity of food stories, the consumption of ‘quality’ foods by those who can afford them and the growing drive to (re)localisation.

³ These reconstructions are most often designed for some combination of environmental and/or socio-economic friendliness in the provisioning of organic foods or in foods that are marketed and sold directly to consumers (e.g. farmers’ markets) to allow farmers to capture more of the value of their products. For work directly related to the connections made in Fair Trade networks, see Goodman (2004).

With the above in mind, this chapter attempts to make two interrelated arguments in urging a more coherent, specific and dedicated consideration of the economic geographies of food. First, the study of food necessitates, in the least, a consideration of the processes, politics and, indeed, *economic geographies of consumption*. From a host of varying perspectives and through varying means, this point in some ways has already been made with respect to the sub-discipline (e.g. Hughes et al, 2008; Cook et al, 2006; Crewe, 2000, 2001, 2003; Goss, 2004, 2006; Hartwick, 1998, 2000; Jackson, 2004; Smith, 1998). Rather, I want to continue with this line of argument to suggest that economic geography as a whole needs to more systematically—and in much better ways—consider the ‘work’ that consumption and consumer culture does in *constructing* and *being constructed* by the ‘geographies of commodity chains’ (Hughes and Reimer, 2004), ‘global production networks’ (Coe et al, 2008a, b; Hughes et al, 2008), and the ‘circuits, flows, and spaces’ of economic geographies (Hudson, 2005). Thus, not just a ‘bolt on’ consideration as the end of production processes, roughing up analytical space to better understand consumer and commodity cultures might mean making ‘relational’ economic geographies (Bathelt and Gluckler, 2003; Boggs and Rantisi, 2003; Yeung, 2005) even more relational, making ‘new’ economic geography (e.g. Martin, 1999) even newer, and ‘cultural political economy’ (Hudson, 2008; Jessop and Oosterlynck, 2008) even more cultural than before.

And very much more than just a passing academic fad (Goss, 2004, 2006) or not worthy of analysis because somehow all consumption is ‘ordinarily’ politicised (Barnett et al, 2005; Barnett and Land, 2007; cf. Cook et al, 2006), I want the specific focus here to be on the *possibilities* but also the *limitations* of consumption politics in making more progressive and ‘alternative’ economic geographies (Leyshon et al, 2003). As recent work details, ethical forms of food consumption are ‘serving to rework the boundaries between the functions of the market, state and civil society’ (Hughes et al, 2008) by inserting notions of responsibility into the governance regimes of supermarkets in the US and UK. At the same time, though, these very same governance regimes have been described as re-inscribing older forms of ‘imperial’ power relations between North and South, with supermarkets—even in ethical trade and consumption networks—dictating labour practices and contract relations with respect to small-scale vegetable producers in Africa (Friedberg, 2007, 2004, 2003). Indeed, others, such as Julie Guthman (2007a, b) have christened these consumer choice-based forms of politics as simply ‘anaemic’ and just one more feather in the cap of neo-liberal environmental and social governance, that, while perhaps tasting good for some of us, doesn’t fundamentally transform the relations of inequality within contemporary food systems. Thus, understanding the inequalities in the *quality* as well as the *quantity* of food consumption at a range of scales—the fact that I am able to munch on healthy organic blueberries while Haitians turn to dirt—is the imperative of any economic geography of food worth its salt.

My second argument relates to how the economic geographies of food might and, perhaps, *should* be framed in order to get at this ‘difference’ that I am arguing is embedded in food. Here, drawing on Elspeth Probyn’s (2000) work, I wish to suggest that the complex and situated *visceral* nature of food—food as profound and deeply felt in the gut, yet also quite ordinarily instinctive, elemental and ‘everyday’ in the biological sense—needs to inform considerations of its economic geographies. This viscosity of food, then, is about the powerful role that food plays in constructing and re-constructing our lives, identities, families, communities and cultures and the uneven economic geographies these create and are enmeshed in. Yet, focusing at the scale of the consuming body is just one way of working up and on the economic geographies of food. I want to argue that it is just as equally important to consider how *absolutely* viscerally entangled food is in the landscapes of

contemporary capitalistic political economies. This then is about the powerful role that uneven economic geographies—and also uneven environmental, social and political geographies—play in shaping and reshaping food and how these political economies, then, construct and reconstruct our lives, identities, families, communities and cultures. I return to these various ‘metabolisms’ of food—body, affect, nature, capital—more below.

In the rest of the chapter, I do the following. First, I want to briefly explore this suggestion of bringing consumption more explicitly into the fold of economic geography by introducing some ways that consumption has been considered in work on food and in other places as well as new areas that might be opened up. Some of these ideas and ways of taking consumption into account—while relatively food specific here—might inform more general approaches to consumption, commodities and ‘commodity cultures’ (Jackson, 1999) in economic geography. In particular, I want to build on the above line that the visceralities of food should perhaps be considered an interesting and useful area of inquiry in agro-food studies⁴ but also the economic geographies of food. Second, I use Fair Trade and other ‘alternative food geographies’ (Maye et al, 2007) as an example of how consumption can be complicit in the creation of novel economies, and indeed, those defined by relationships of care and responsibility (Lawson, 2007). But here, I also want to talk about the established but growing ‘transgressions’ between the alternative economic geographies of foods such as organic and Fair Trade and those of more conventional and mainstream political economies such as the supermarket giants. This chapter then, is less about a recounting of economic geography’s historical trajectories—as performed more explicitly by the other authors in the volume—to consumption and agro-food networks and more about suggesting possible avenues for further research and theoretical development.

Consuming Economic Geographies: Let’s Feast!

Writing in the book *Remaking Nature* (Braun and Castree, 1998), Allen Pred (1998, 151) states something I completely agree with:

...the nature of consumption at this precarious moment needs to be re-cognized—seen again and thought anew—in such a manner that its inseparability from nature becomes every bit as explicit as its deep entanglements with politics, the economy and culture.

He continues (Pred, 1998, 152-153)—reproduced here at some length—to make part of his case for why consumption ‘needs to be re-cognized’.

In key ways which we are normally unaccustomed to thinking of, consumption is a process intricately entangled in the situated practices, power relations and meanings of hypermodern everyday life, in the commonplace spatialities of individual and collective existence. It is so completely and complexly entangled with those phenomena that it may be regarded onto itself only through acts of academic legerdemain. Moreover, insofar as consumption also encompasses the actual usage of products of reworked nature, it is in a double sense central to the nature of everyday life.

⁴ *Gastronomica*

As a process, consumption neither begins nor ends with the acts of shopping and purchasing, of buying objects produced for sale. The purchase of a good, however inexpensive or dear, demands foreknowledge and the awakening of a want or desire, the emergence of a need or requirement. However, advertising is rarely the sole or even the most important source of pre-purchase knowledge regarding the existence and qualities of a particular good, seldom the single stimulator of want and desire, only exceptionally the primary means through which awareness of need arises in everyday life.

It is through situated practice, through social interaction at sites of work, education, and other institutionally embedded activities, through formal and informal conversations participated in during the conduct of daily life, through everyday discourses and representations, encountered in public spaces, private spaces and the mass media, through visual and aural observations, made in the course of site-to-site movements, that consumer knowledge is accumulated, that the desire to possess is aroused, that needs and wants are constructed, that requirements and usage possibilities become apparent, that tastes take shape.

If the acquisition of consumption knowledge – like the acquisition of any other type of knowledge – cannot be separated from doing; if the formation of wants and needs, desires and requirements, are interfused with numerous forms of daily doing; then it follows that these elements of the consumption process cannot be severed from the power relations associated with the practices of everyday life in a particular place or area. They cannot be extricated from those social relations which define who – individually and collectively – may or may not do what, when and where, under what conditions of control or surveillance, if any.

Power relations – including those existing between men and women, parents and children, citizens and regulating governmental authorities – are furthermore pervasively associated with the usage of the already purchased, with the who, when, where and how rules which govern practical utilization. In addition, they permeate everyday nonconsumption as well as everyday consumption. Class relations and other power relations that produce differences in disposable income or money availability by extension produce circumstances where they desired and within sight may remain unacquired because unacquireable, where the wanted or needed and within reach may remain unobtainable because unaffordable, where the inability to purchase the much wished for may yield social tensions and the cultural and political reworking thereof. Individual and group consumption differences may thus be as much a matter of power relations as a matter of taste, preference and the quest for distinction. This is doubly the case, for tastes, preferences and notions of distinction are never the product of autonomous mind, but always directly or indirectly constructed through participation in quotidian practices and their associated power relations.

Quite a bit to chew on: wide-ranging, complex and slightly messy, but also very relevant with respect to making a case for expanded and better considerations of consumption in economic geographies. But how to take these arguments (and others) forward in a more concrete way? What I want to do very briefly—with Pred's statements above as a kind of loadstone—is collate and sketch out a few consumption-related themes in recent work on agro-food studies, alternative food networks, and elsewhere in Geography; some of these link up either explicitly or implicitly with recent writings in economic geography but from often different

angles. These themes—and the questions that arise in their context—are limited in scope and detail, but suggest some potentially fruitful avenues for further research on the economic geographies of food but also the shifting economic geographies of consumption.

Food as Embedded Commodity Culture

Drawing in part on the work of Mark Granovetter (1985; see also Krippner, 2001), notions of the *embeddedness* of economic activities—that they are enmeshed in culture, politics, networks, territories and spaces—have formed a particular axis of research and writing in economic geography (e.g. Hess, 2004; Coe et al, 2008b). The concept of embeddedness has also been taken up to some fruitful ends in agro-food studies as a way to conceptualise about the growing importance of the indications of production place and the ecological concerns evinced in quality foods, but most specifically in the ‘closer’ provisioning networks and social relationships between farmers and consumers. David Goodman (2003, 1; see also Hinrichs, 2000, Murdoch et al, 2000; Higgins et al, 2008) has been one to lead this charge suggesting that

[e]mbeddedness, trust, place and their variants [are valuable] conceptual touchstones but in the service of empirically grounded analyses of alternative food practices, institutional mechanisms of rural governance and policy, and the potential of [alternative agro-food networks] as engines of rural economic dynamism.

He has been cautious however, in deploying this notion, as—in citing Sayer’s (1997, 2001) observations—embeddedness has the potential to overlay the ‘nice-ities’ of capitalism and leave the issues of exploitation and hardcore political economic ‘profit-at-any-and-all-cost’ imperatives too neatly to the side. Sonnino and Marsden (2006), going a bit further, problematise but also situate embeddedness directly at the centre of their suggested research agenda on alternative food networks in Europe. They are interested in a more “holistic” approach to embeddedness in food by understanding the “... political, institutional, and regulatory context in which alternative food networks operate” and the “the local/regional context in which they take shape” (Sonnino and Marsden, 2006, 189). Thus, while interested in how these new foods (re)embed the connections (e.g. social, economic, ecological) between production and consumption, consumption *itself*—as process, as practice, as politics—gets little sustained play here.⁵ Indeed, what is the role of consumption and (green) consumerist shifts in contributing to ‘embeddedness’ and these (re)embedded relations? In short, as Pred states above, these relations are always and already embedded in consumption but also embedded *as* and *through* consumption processes, practices, and politics. And least we forget, consumption itself, following from Sayer (2001), is networked and indeed embedded in the relations and subjectivities of class, gender and race, *as well as* one’s identity as, say, an ‘ethical’ consumer (Barnett et al, 2005).

A second point to make here is related to the ‘commodity-ness’ of how embedding actually gets done through and in consumption: commodities and their material culture(s) are central in many ways to these embedding relationships and how they play out. Questions might then arise about the differences of the nature of embedding relations across different commodities—computers versus clothes versus food—and what sorts of characteristics of the

⁵ This is similar to Hughes et al (2008) implied critique of the use of embeddedness in understanding Global Production Networks (Coe et al, 2008b).

commodity form is important and/or lends itself to being more ‘embedded’ than other commodities and economic geographies. Thus, how and in what ways do different commodity cultures—and their geographies—matter and in what ways when we conceptualise about embeddedness in relation to consumption? More specifically, how does food’s difference as a biologically ‘incorporated’ commodity perhaps shift how and why it is (re)embedded in producer/consumer relations and within consumption-scapes relative to other commodities and their co-incident networks?

Food Knowledge and Knowledgeable Foods

Discussions of knowledge of, about, and even on commodities have figured greatly in accounts of food in Geography (Cook and Crang, 1996), as well as with other goods such as cut flowers (Hughes, 2000, Coulson, 2004) and fashion (Crewe, 2004). As Hughes et al (2008, 351) have it in their excellent work on ethical campaigning in US and UK supermarkets, the concern is with the *circulation* of the knowledge of commodity biographies “...that shape consumers’ understandings of the journeys taken by goods through production and distribution networks”. Indeed, plugging this ‘knowledge deficit’ of consumers’ lack of understanding of the environmental and social impact of the goods they purchase is proving to be one of the cornerstones of sustainable consumption movements and policies in the UK (Hinton, forthcoming). Providing this knowledge about origins and the social and ecological conditions under which goods are produced has become the hallmark of ‘quality’ foods such as organic and Fair Trade (Goodman, 2004). Yet, even without knowing where our food comes from, we are intimately and inextricably *materially* connected to the pig farms that produce our bacon and/or those idyllic ‘natural’ farms that grow our organic lettuce mix (Goodman, 1999).

But how do consumers actually engage with, alter their practices and thus potentially open up—but also close down—particular economic geographies? This is a particularly prudent question given the mainstreaming (co-option?) of social and environmental concerns through Corporate Social Responsibility schemes that are standard operating procedure for just about every ‘big business’ player concerned with their brand value. Recent work by Sally Eden and colleagues (Eden et al, 2008a, b) is beginning to address these issues by looking into consumers’ *actual* engagements with commodities in the form of food ‘assurance’ schemes made up of ‘local’, organic and ethical foods which are certified and labelled as such. This is an important line of work because

...even studies which are notionally about consumption and ‘commodity cultures’ often fail to address how consumers think, by analysing marketing discourse rather than the meanings and practices involved in shopping and eating (e.g. Jackson, 2002; Bryant and Goodman, 2004; Barnett et al., 2005). This risks misrepresenting consumers, so we address this by considering not how assurance schemes and certification work and are promoted, but how consumers think they work. We thus take a more consumer-oriented approach to food assurance, considering the ways in which consumers perceive, interpret and utilise different schemes and also problematising the simple reconnection that they offer. (Eden et al, 2008b, 3-4; emphasis in original)

They are finding that there is a problem with this ‘knowledge-fix’: providing consumers information in the form of labels and logos is not as simplistic as many make it out to be nor is it an uncomplicated way to more sustainably ‘fix’ the food system. In their own words:

[first], the knowledge-fix is easy to argue but difficult to implement. So, rather than arguing for reconnection through information, let us look more closely at how consumers think about reconnection and why they often do not (perhaps deliberately) think too much about the origins of the food that they routinely buy. Whether we call this a politics of reconnection, a politics of traceability or a politics of informed consumer choice, the point is that it should raise questions for consumers about food production and not necessarily lead them to expect simple or easy answers – the ‘knowledge-fix’ itself can be problematic if that is its effect. Second, let us put consumers back into research. Too many papers evoke them merely as constructs, thus making large assumptions about consumer knowledge, rather than investigating how that knowledge itself is produced and consumed in a complex and comparative network. We have looked in detail at how real consumers think and talk about food, but we have only drawn on a small sample of 45 people, leaving plenty of scope for more empirical work. Third, we have plenty of good research on specific commodities and their vertical supply chains, but again this is not how consumers see the world. We need to think about how to integrate theoretical frames that deal with the complex verticalities of production with frames that deal with the (equally complex but in very different ways) horizontalities of consumption and, in particular, how people weigh up seemingly contradictory or competing information from multiple sources in order to make sophisticated judgements about that most basic necessity: food. (Eden et al, 2008a)

Thus, the ‘hows’ and ‘whys’ of consumers’ engagement with commodity knowledge(s) and the effects (or not) that these (non)engagements have on ‘alternative’ economic geographies is one possible yet important avenue work engaging with ‘diverse’ economic geographies (Gibson-Graham, 2006).

The Consuming Power of Food

Power in the food system, and in particular the power of corporations and agribusiness to *control* the food system, has played well in agro-food studies for sometime now (e.g. Hendrickson and Hefferenan, 2002; Magdoff et al, 2000; McMichael, 2000; Whatmore, 1995). Indeed, what Morgan et al (2006) call “looking into the eyes of the hog” has generously slopped over into more popular media with the likes of *Fast Food Nation* (Schlosser, 2001) Morgan Spurlock’s (2004) paean to McDonald’s in *Super Size Me*, and Michael Pollan’s *Omnivore’s Dilemma* (2006; see also Cook, 2006; Blythman, 2004; Tudge, 2004). Here, in some accounts, consumerist-driven—or at least consumer-dependent and -connected—alternative and quality foods are positioned as forms of resistance and oppositional to the State-enabled, corporate-controlled global food sector. And, no matter how anaemic, problematic (i.e. classist, unengaged, etc) or contradictory one feels that consumption choice-led pathways to change might be (e.g. Guthman, 2007a, b; Freidberg, 2003a, b), there is no denying the power these politics have had in capturing collective and economic imaginations. From the corporate-connected (RED)TM campaign developed

through Bono's concern with African development⁶, to the 'Good Earth Fine Wine' conservation campaign of Australia's Banrock Station which gives consumers licence to 'help the Earth one glass at a time' (see Figure 2), consumer choice has quickly become *the* way of doing business. And as Suzanne Freidberg (2004b) has suggested in what she calls the 'ethical complex' of food, it is consumers in combination with corporations, certification and labelling schemes, activists and—very importantly—the media that are involved in constructing this new cultural politics environment and development in alternative foods.

In recent work on alternative food networks, more critical research and writing has started to look into the nitty-gritty practices of these networks, their governance regimes and their potentially awkward relationships of power. First, 'quality' in food and other commodities is slippery at the best of times; it is subjective and very often subject not only to tastes but the warp and woof of the market. Because of this—how and by whom it is defined and deployed—quality acts as a 'boundary-making' governance tool (Bryant et al, forthcoming) in that it often becomes the arbiter of who is in particular networks and who is left out. Erecting boundaries has been one result of the mainstreaming of the Fair Trade market, where some of the poorest producing cooperatives and farmers are left to the wayside because the quality of the goods they grow are not up to snuff (Lockie and Goodman, 2006; Renard, 2005). Second, the development and deployment of production and certification standards, as in Fair Trade and organic markets, are the development and deployment of new governance regimes that denote the exercise of power by (historically Northern) standards institutions. Thus, international regulatory regimes in alternative food networks dictate how commodities are and can be produced to impact the livelihoods of people in positive but sometimes complex and unintended ways (see for example, Moberg, 2005; Lyon, 2006; Getz and Schreck, 2006; Mutersbaugh, 2002). Third, even in so-called alternative food networks, corporations and agribusinesses are making their presence felt, thus adding another layer to the power dynamics in these networks. Guthman (2004b) refers to this as the 'conventionalization' of the organic in the shift in California to massive-scale organic farms, managed in 'industrial-farming-lite' ways that just squeak in under what is required by organic farming standards. Renard (2005), in discussing the mainstreaming of Fair Trade coffee, talks about how the influence of large companies and retailers such as Starbucks are altering the relations of power in their favour to the detriment of producer cooperatives. Thus, given their neo-liberal, market-oriented characteristics, ethical and alternative consumption networks (Clarke et al, 2007) are not quite as innocent as they have been characterised and might seem on the surface.

Yet, in the rush to find and lionise food alternatives, the larger and more complex questions of power in the food system—who gets to eat what, how much and why—have receded into the background, especially in parts of agro-food studies. The compelling and important case is being made to make the exploitation of labour much less 'invisible' as one of the cornerstones of research on conventional and alternative food networks (e.g. Harrison, 2008; Guthman, 2004). In addition to this work, though, we must continue looking into questions of (the lack of) food consumption, especially in a continually unequal work were many—even in the overconsuming North—don't have enough to eat and/or suffer various forms of food deprivation, a situation many farmworkers find themselves in. At the same time but without

⁶ The campaign has partnered with some of "the world's most iconic brands" such as American Express, Dell Computers, Microsoft, Apple and Gap so that a portion of the (RED)-sanctioned purchases of particular products by 'responsible' consumers go to promote AIDS campaigns and development in Africa. As some of the promotional material states 'The Result? You have a new iPod and you helped save a persons life' (see <http://www.joinred.com/red/>); now, what could be wrong with that?!

ducking these wider questions of power, research and writing on alternative and quality food networks might work to open up novel and ‘hopeful spaces’ of thinking the economy ‘differently’ (Clarke et al, 2007; Gibson-Graham, 2006; Leyson and Lee, 2003; Lawson, 2005, 2007); here these alternatives might serve as forms of critique that can then act to hold States and corporations responsible for the inequalities of consumption they are complicity in. The not so easy trick now is working out how to turn hope and critique into practice and politics in order to make these alternative forms of praxis ‘sticky’ in the slippery worlds of the shifting landscapes of consumerist capitalism.

Visceral Grub: Food as Ordinarily and Extra-Ordinarily Felt

In thinking about food’s difference, we would be well served to heed Probyn’s (2000, 32) suggestions, starting with the idea that

[e]ating refracts who we are. Food/body/eating assemblages reveal the ways in which identity has become elementary, and that its composite elements are always in movement. As alimentary assemblages, eating recalls with force the elemental nature of class, gender, sexuality, nation. But beyond these monumental categories, eating places different orders of things and ways of being alongside each other, inside and outside inextricably linked. Beyond the facile celebration of authenticity, sincerity or conversely of the simulacra and artifice, alimentary identities reveal a mix of the primal and the hyperfake. But what is of interest here is the ways in which this extends our understanding and appreciation of the rich complexity of living in the present. ... For some, this means wearing one’s stomach on one’s sleeve: thinking about where food comes from, or how core identities are now ingested in multicultural ways of being in the world. As such, these alimentary identities are ways of reworking the categories that once defined us. Now, beyond a model of inside and out, we are alimentary assemblages, bodies that eat with vigorous class, ethnic and gendered appetites, mouth machines that ingest and regurgitate, articulating what we are, what we eat and what eats us.

The viscosity of food is about its connections—inside, outside, gender, sexuality, et al—but also how food contains the emotional (e.g. one’s stomach on one’s sleeve), the inexpressible, and the biological and how these are all inseparable and entangled in complex, complementary and ambiguous ways. The visceral incorporation of food in the rendering of our corporeal bodies (FitzSimmons and Goodman, 1998) is about the centrality of the meanings of food, but also very much the (non)emotional and biological relationships we have with it. In short, food is ordinary in its characteristic as simply the ‘fuel’ that keeps us going, but also extra-ordinary in the meals that make who and what we, our families and our cultures are. Simultaneously, food is also *extra-ordinary* in its characteristic as fuel and also *ordinary* in the meals that make who and what we, our families and our cultures are. You are what you eat, but also *how, when, where* and *why* you eat. Thus, food is ‘good to think’ (Beardsworth and Keil, 1997; see also Sage, 2003)—especially for those that can buy into this knowledge economy—but also very much ‘good to feel’ and often in ‘more-than-representational’ (Lorimer, 2005) in unconscious and ‘primal’ ways. Thus, reflexive aesthetic taste and its antimonies (Guthman, 2003) are just one factor in constructing the visceral entanglements we have with food, especially in a world where a full belly can often trump those dictates of ‘good taste’.

And yet, while suggesting these more ‘touchy feely’ (e.g. cultural) interpretations of food’s (and consumption’s) place in more than just economic geographies, it is imperative to not lose sight of its material connections between bodies and ecologies, but also the historical, continuing and, indeed, equally inseparable *visceral* connections that food has with the contemporary processes of global capitalism. This point resonates with my arguments above about the circulations of power *of* and *in* food networks. As one readily available example, for most of the post-war era, coffee has been the second most valuable globally-traded commodity after oil and the commodity chain touches and, indeed, determines the lives of tens of millions throughout the world. Yet, 50 percent of this trade is controlled by a mere four companies, with only 10 percent of this value trickling back down to the farmers who actually planted, cultivated and harvested the coffee (Daviron and Ponte, 2005). And, even more insidiously, as the opening brief story highlights, as markets shift around biofuels and changing global food demands, increasing profits for agro-food multinationals such as ADM and Cargill equate with growing misery for many of the world’s poor whose ‘effective demand’ is simply below that of the recent Northern penchant for ‘environmentally friendly’ petrol.⁷ Other work on retail-scapes points to the local, national and now international (Wrigley et al, 2005; Blythman, 2004) power of food retailers to determine what it is and how most eat but also what and how food is produced. As of 2007 in the UK, Tesco had 31% of the market for groceries⁸, and—what might be shocking for some but exciting for others—a growing proportion of the market for organic foods.

A final point I want to raise here concerns the connections of the visceralities of food and the growing problematics of the ‘meaning-full’ constructions of some foods as ‘bad’ and others as ‘good’; this is especially pertinent in the concerns over ‘healthy’ foods and obese bodies (Herrick, 2007; Guthman and DuPuis, 2006). For Julie Guthman, these awkward dualisms have mapped onto the oppositional discourses, meanings and materialities of fast food and ‘slow food’, the later represented by pricy organic salad greens. In reflecting on the particularities of organic food and farming in California, she (Guthman, 2003, 55-56) puts it in no uncertain terms:

... [i]t is striking that fast food and organic/slow food continue to be posed as binary, even organic assemblages, if you will, of taste, body type, social consciousness, class, mode of production, and so forth. Sometimes termed tendency and counter-tendency, sometimes hegemony and resistance, one of the problems with these oppositions is they impart a good deal of subjectivity on to the organic or slow food eater while the fast food eater is treated as mindless dupe. ... At the very least, a binary framing should highlight the way in which privileged eating is intrinsically tied to impoverished eating; that what allows an aesthetic of food is disparity. The fact that many of those who eat organic food came into their wealth from the some of the very processes that enabled the fast food industry’s growth surely tightens the relationship between yuppie eaters and their fast food counterparts. ... [t]o posit one assemblage as unwaveringly good and the other as altogether bad de-politicizes a potentially powerful politics of consumption. Little is it considered that organic production

⁷ Thankfully, even the spectacle of Formula One racing is jumping on the ‘green’ biofuel bandwagon (Henry, 2007)

⁸ Four firms—Asda (16%), Morrisons (11%), Sainsbury’s (16%), and Tesco (31%)—had a whopping 75% of the UK market for all grocery sales (Cabinet Office, 2008).

depends on the same systems of marginalized labour as does fast food. Or that organic salad mix led the way in convenience packaging, and is often grown out of place and out of season. Or that fast food serves women who work outside the home who are then blamed for depending on it to manage family and work. Or that slow food presumes a tremendous amount of unpaid feminized labour. Restaurants serve up their own contradictions. How else to explain the haute restaurant that serves organic [salad mix] and foie gras? The well-paid artisan cook working in tandem with the illegal immigrant bus boy? If the political importance of organic food/slow food is attention to the labour processes and ecologies by which food is produced, it is imperative to make sure that these valorized alternatives reflect alternative values.

To sum up the, these ideas about and within the visceralities of food—along with the other themes connecting food consumption to embedded commodity cultures, knowledge economies, and questions of power and inequality—hold important areas and avenues for work on the economic geographies of food. In short, these points are not to be digested raw, but rather require considerable mixing and kneading, to hopefully, after baking a bit, produce a few tasty tidbits that might be worth breaking off and chewing over in thinking about the economic geographies of food and those of consumption.

Transgressive Foods: Building Economic Geographies of Care through Consumption

With the mainstreaming of environmental concerns in much of the global North, consumption has begun to take on green but also a newer ‘ethical’ hue (Harrison et al, 2005). From rapidly growing organic food markets, to the selling-out of hybrid cars in the US, to British Petroleum re-branding itself as ‘Beyond Petroleum’, these growing concerns have shifted economic geographies in practice and/or at least in greenwashed principle. Some of the more ‘hearty’ versions of ethical consumption include those provisioning networks mobilised around the relations and ethics of care: care of and for Others, care of and for Nature, care of and for doing and thinking economies ‘otherwise’ (Gibson-Graham, 2006). And, as highlighted in earlier work (Goodman, 2004; Smith, 2000; Whatmore and Thorne, 1997) and more recently (Barnett et al, 2005), this is often about care ‘at a distance’, thus across spatial and other (socio-cultural, economic, political, material) sorts of divides. The massive and rapid growth of the Fair Trade market, in particular, is a substantial infiltration of an ethics of care and responsibility into commodity-based ‘nourishing networks’ (Whatmore and Thorne, 1997; see also Reynolds et al, 2007). Yet *both* Fair Trade and organic foods, in some ways, are about the care of ‘Other’ places—Fair Trade in looking after the conditions of peasant farmers and the organic in its concern for nature—across space in the provisioning of what Whatmore and Clark (2006) refer to as ‘good food’. But even in quality foods more generally these relations are present; take, for example, the Piper’s crisps above. The description on the bag and the website are very much about developing these relations of care among consumers, the food and the conditions of production. Thus, the knowledge-fix provided by information about the farmers growing the various ingredients and the specific landscapes they come from is not just about providing the knowledge itself, but providing this knowledge so it can work hard in *getting* us to care about where and who the food comes from. These relations are also about the ‘care of the self’ in eating something not only tasty and ‘care-fully’ made, but something more ‘authentic’—*vis a vis* more conventional networks—in the greater closeness to landscapes, nature and farmers evinced in Piper’s production networks.

Recent work by Kneafsey et al (forthcoming) in their book *Alternative Food Networks: Reconnecting Consumers, Producers, and Food* has begun to more seriously and extensively investigate these relations of care; they start from the following question: “to what extent and how do we value food, its production, its distribution and its consumption?”. To answer this, using an ‘ethics of care’ framing, they investigate several

‘alternatives’ to predominant food supply arrangements ... examin[ing] the identities, motives and practices of people actively involved in trying to produce and consume food in ways which allow them to address a variety of societal and individual concerns about food. Their efforts, we argue, are integral to the construction of a practical critique of current food structures. Recognizing the multi-dimensionality of ‘alternative’ food relationships, we move beyond the emphasis on economic imperatives for producers to ‘connect’ with the market, and examine the ethical, emotional and reflexive spaces of ‘reconnection’. In so doing, we engage with themes of care, love, pleasure, anxiety, choice and convenience, and show how these elements are spoken of, and experienced by, a range of producers and consumers. ... [T]he motives and practices of those involved can be understood within the context of a broad framework of care for close and distant ‘others’ (variously defined), which in turn provides discursive and material expressions of ‘reconnection’ with the potential to radically re-align producer and consumer relationships through food.

But how is this ethics of care conceptualised and practiced by consumers? In conversations with consumers involved in five different alternative food schemes—the Salop Drive Market Garden, the EarthShare and Waterland Organics food box programmes, Farrington’s Farm Shop, and a ‘natural beef’ producers known as Moorland Farm—they found them to be

... knowledgeable, thoughtful and caring on many levels. They are far from the model of the alienated, economic rationaliser searching out cheap, convenient food and knowing little of the implications. Rather they are rational on their own terms, participating in practices that have an emotional, or moral, logic as well as an economic one. ‘Reconnection’ with the production of their food has had wide ranging implications for most of these consumers. Involvement in these schemes went beyond relationships with individuals and, for some participants, encompassed much broader notions of community, education and support for a way of life they believed in. Participation in the ‘alternative’ food sector allowed for and encouraged practices that embraced caring at many levels.

Detailed analysis of ‘alternative’ consumption practices reveals how problematic the ‘common sense’ notions of choice and convenience that are normally associated with the food system can be. Our analysis shows these concepts can only be understood within consumers’ wider practices of everyday life and their ethical frameworks. ‘Alternative’ food schemes may appear to be limited in the choice of foods they offer, or inconvenient and time consuming in their access arrangements, but clearly, for some consumers at least, they meet needs for good food, valued relationships,

sense of community and care for the wider environment in a way no large food retailer can. ... [T]hese consumers show the pleasures that are possible from doing things differently, the practical ways that different forms of food procurement can fit into busy lives and the simple contentment of eating food that you like from sources that you care about.

As they conclude about the wider implications and, indeed, politics of this ethics of care in reconnection,

[t]he practices we have examined suggest that producers and consumers are prepared to think carefully about their relationships with others, human and non-human, close and distant. They are also prepared to act in ways which not only meet their own needs but also address the needs of those others. Participation in 'alternative' food schemes might not save the world, at least not in the short term, but it might help to build the knowledge, and positive relationships that create the capacity for change ... [and support] all those who want to build more equitable, more sustainable, and more closely connected relationships between consumers and the producers of their food.

One of the most interesting contemporary characteristics of alternative food networks is how they are now thoroughly *transgressed* into, by and with conventional economic geographies.⁹ No longer is Fair Trade only available at dusty and smelly charity shops or through mail order, nor is organic food defined as dirty, wilted, holey lettuce sold to and by 'beards and sandals' types. Rather, each is now thoroughly *mainstreamed* and, as quality has increased and been accentuated over time, prominently displayed and sold in almost every chain of supermarket; this is particularly the case in the UK as many have worked to improve their green and 'local-farmer-friendly' credentials to consumers. Both Fair Trade and the organic are now very much the provenance of middle- and upper-class consumers concerned with food quality and food's qualities. Yet, as Wal-mart/Asda¹⁰ begins to expand its own-label brand of organic products as well as its product lines for Fair Trade goods, price conscious consumers might very well become the new 'growth' segments for these markets.

Conceptual and other work is starting here on these transgressions (e.g. Kneafsey et al, forthcoming; Holloway et al, 2007), but how do we better account for and theorise about these continuing and growing transgressions of the alternative and mainstream? Specifically, how do we account for the novel 'power geometries' (Massey, 1993) in alternative foods and their governance and how will this begin to change over time as they get even more deeply entrenched in conventional and unequally powerful networks? What is the scope for and possibility of resistance of even newer 'alternatives'—perhaps organic farmer cooperatives, consumer-led organic cooperatives (Little et al, forthcoming), or even the expansion of alternative provisioning networks such as food boxes and farmers' markets—to form in response to further supermarket 'capture' of organic and Fair Trade markets? More generally, what scope is there in economic geography to talk about these processes of transgression?

⁹ Indeed, the fate of the organic market is very much attached to the cost of conventional food and that of oil. As recent news stories are describing (Naughton, 2008), as the price of 'regular' food and petrol goes up, there is less income available for consumers to buy quality foods and so these markets suffer; in a way, then, organic food markets and their 'health' have been very much tied to the 'cheap' food and fuel policies of much of the North.

¹⁰ Asda is wholly owned and operated by US multinational retailer Wal-Mart.

This issue has been raised in *Alternative Economic Spaces* (Leyshon et al, 2003), but little has focused specifically on consumption and consuming processes (but cf. Hughes et al, 2008) related to these transgressions or the role of consumers as thinking, feeling and doing agents. Thus, as is the focus of this chapter, what are the ways in which alternative food consumption is shifting some of the economic geographies of food?

I wish to end here with a very brief mention of two other forms of transgression being expressed specifically in Fair Trade networks. First, as described in Freidberg's (2004b) take on the ethical complex of food, the media—in the form of news stories and investigative journalism—has become an important agent in the telling of the story of quality foods to the public. In Fair Trade, the role of the media has been taken to the next level in the form of celebrity involvement and endorsements in its publicity. Centred on the UK's Fairtrade Foundation's 'Fair Trade Fortnight', two campaigns in particular have seen Fair Trade transgress easily into the realm of the spectacle (Goodman, forthcoming; see Figure 3). In addition, Chris Martin, the frontman for the Emmy-winning, platinum selling band Coldplay—through the orchestrations of Oxfam UK who now has a fulltime celebrity liaison for its various campaigns—has also taken up the mantle of Fair Trade. From writing 'Make Trade Fair' on his piano at the MTV Music Awards, to scribbling an equals symbol (i.e. "=") on his hand during performances, he has played a major part in this spectaclisation and transgression of Fair Trade into the mainstream media. Clearly this publicity has been good for the Fair Trade market in the UK which is predicted to be over £400 million with a world-wide market upwards of £1.1 billion. What it says about Fair Trade politics, though, is a different story and is perhaps quite ambiguous given the once-prominent stories of small-scale Fair Trade farmers and peasants are being lost in the glitz and glamour of celebrities.¹¹

A second transgression making its way into Fair Trade networks involves the development of new modes of governance. But these new modes are not just in relation to more conventional networks but even with respect to 'normal' Fair Trade commodity chains as they have historically been set up. Here, portions of two companies—Divine Chocolate initially (see Doherty and Meehan, 2006; Doherty and Tranchell, 2005; Tiffen, 2002), but now also OKé USA Bananas¹²—are actually *owned* by the farming cooperatives from which the cacao and bananas are respectively sourced. Here is what the company says about the "OKé difference":

An OKé banana and a Not OKé banana are two different things. For starters, OKé growers own 50% of the company - this ensures they receive an OKé wage, along with OKé living and working conditions. These guys don't ride in the back of stretch limos but they do get to enjoy the fruits of their labors, and rightly so. But ... you ask, what's inside that ripened OKé banana skin for me? Well, the answer is the knowledge you've got yourself a banana that shows some respect for the person who produces it and the environment it's produced in - and that will make it taste better than any other banana you've ever tasted. Believe me. (OKé USA, 2008)

This shift in ownership and Fair Trade governance holds quite a bit of promise in that ownership of at least one portion of the means of production—in the form of the actual company buying, shipping and selling the Fair Trade bananas—might have lasting

¹¹ For more on the promises and perils of this celebriidisation of politics but with respect to climate change, see Boykoff and Goodman (2008).

¹² See <http://www.okeusa.com/>

transformative and powerful political potential. How far these governance regimes might spread and/or consolidate market power remains to be seen, but they at least define a novel space of hope in the typically very unequal regimes of economic power and ownership between North and South.

Watch This (Food) Space: Towards Visceral Economic Geographies of Food

As David Harvey (1990) laments in one of his most famous writings, the grapes sitting on your store shelves are silent and so cannot speak to you about where, who and by whom—and especially for Harvey—through what processes of social and environmental exploitation they were produced. In the almost two decades since he wrote about these ‘silent grapes’, academics, journalists and others have taken up this charge and started to speak for various commodities, especially food, through various forms of innovative analyses. Indeed, now many of the commodities—and especially quality foods—have started to tell these stories *about themselves* as a selling point and in response to consumers’ growing and continuing unease about where their foods come from.

In the round, though, in economic geography, these engagements with commodities—and I would argue in economic geography as a field more generally—have all but been focused on the processes and networks of production in the likes of ‘Global Production Networks’ and the analytical figure of the ‘firm’¹³. The grapes are beginning to speak, but they are only really telling a part of the story; in short, the politics and process of the economic geographies of consumption have remained relatively over-shadowed and under-examined. And, as argued here, with the study of food in particular, considerations of consumption and consumers should be front and centre or at least a more substantive part of the story than they have been thus far. From my perspective, there doesn’t seem to be any good arguments for not considering consumption as part of the remit of the field and indeed, might provide a more holistic and rigorous approach to the relationalities of economic geographies and contemporary societies. In the least we might be able to explore how the shifting concerns of consumers to more ‘ethical’ consumption in things like Fair Trade and the organic are constructing, transgressing and politicising novel and existing economic geographies, but also how these concerns are quite partial, limited and limiting in their bids to make food networks more sustainable.

In food studies, some inspiring and interesting work along these lines has begun (e.g. Cook et al, 2004; Cook and Harrison, 2003; Guthman, 2003a, b; Freidberg, 2004a; Hughes et al, 2008). Yet, much more theoretical and empirical work remains to be done, especially now in these ‘transgressive’ spaces of food where the ‘alternative’ is now thoroughly mixed up in more conventional and powerful networks. Indeed, going into a Wal-mart/Asda to buy organic carrots and/or Fair Trade coffee thoroughly problematises what might stand as food politics in contemporary societies and suggests that these politics might be much ‘dirtier’ than many agro-food critics (e.g. Guthman, 2007a, b) would like. In addition, it is my hope that the discussion entertained above about embeddedness, knowledge and networks of power and the visceralities of food might inform work on the economic geographies of food, but also work to possibly ‘transgress’ into other research and writings on other commodities, other economic geographies and the field more broadly speaking. There is one line of work, however, I feel is a ‘must’ for the field: uncovering and understanding the continuing and

¹³ Indeed, aren’t firms almost exclusively about the production of ‘something’ for consumption by someone somewhere?

now accentuated inequalities in who eats what, why and where. If I had to eat dirt for breakfast, I would want to know first of all, why, but then what the hell to do about it. And, here, we must not let those working on and in alternative food networks off the hook: uncovering inequalities in food consumption is not just a question about quantity, but also very much about the inequalities inherent in food quality and qualities and the structures that work to construct these inequalities. Thus, exploring the limits to but also the spaces opened up by alternative food networks and economic geographies can only serve to make more hopeful food geographies in a continually unequal world.

Now, let's see ... what's for lunch?

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Figure 1. Website for Piper's Crisps



Figure 2. Website of Banrock Station wines

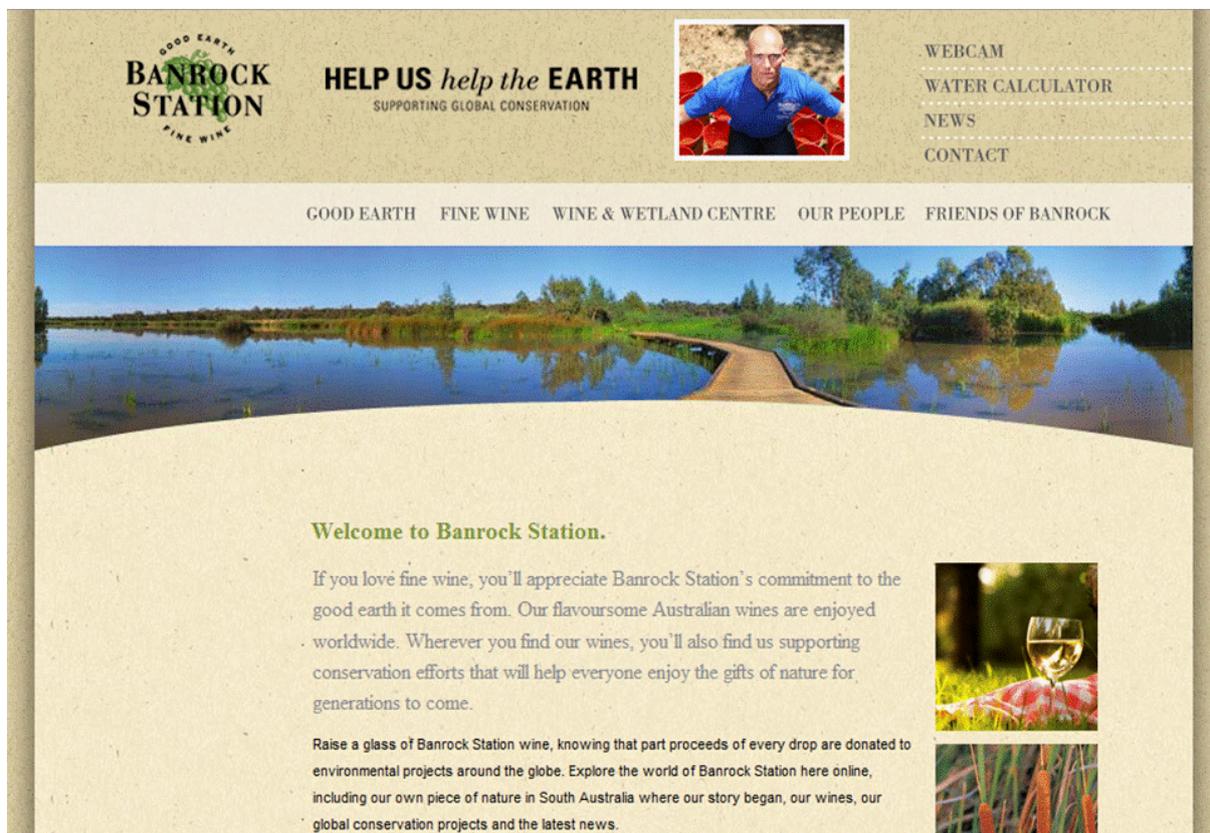


Figure 3. The first Fairtrade Foundation campaign involved the ‘dumping’ of various commodities on a host of movie, music and TV stars in efforts to bring attention to the unfair trade practices of the US and Europe in form of farming subsidies, over production and the dumping of cheap commodities on poorer countries. The second campaign involved a series of photographs of celebrities from the ‘green’ business as well as media worlds engaging with various foods on/in parts of their bodies.

